

VIRGINIA MIDDLETONS GREAT MYSTERY STORY

SMITH'S

MAGAZINE

MAY, 1915 • 15 CENTS

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No. 2

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

VOLUME 21

MAY, 1915

NUMBER 2

The Sylvester Standard

By Anne O'Hagan

Author of "Dorinda Tries Domestic Life," "The Epidemic," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY H. F. NONNAMAKER

CHAPTER I.

TO Roger Hayes, that nook of the promenade deck of the *König Adolphus* in which Miss Chloe Sylvester was often to be found looked, this afternoon, like a flower garden with the sun temporarily under a cloud. The group of empty deck chairs blossomed with discarded sweaters, of those strong pinks and purples, saffrons and blues, in which only clear-skinned youth should ever dare to front the blinding challenge of the mid-ocean sun. Bags from which particolored silks and wools spilled were dropped upon the floor; novels had been hastily discarded; candy boxes presented their alluring contents to the passer-by. But the group of girls, of which Chloe was one—in Mr. Hayes' decided, though recently formed, opinion, *the* one—had disappeared. He wandered disconsolately away. Had he not engaged Chloe to take her constitutional with him an hour after luncheon? Where was she?

Mrs. Lamont, iron-gray, portly, and shrewd, surprised the telltale expression on his face as she came by at her vigorous pace. She smiled her twisted, mocking smile.

"The garden of delight entirely deserted?" she said, breaking her march. "I believe Miss Allenson and Miss Drew

have bribed their way into the crow's nest——"

"Thank you," said Roger shortly. "I was looking for them." His infatuation was in that stage when it seemed necessary to make a decent effort to conceal it.

"And Miss Langworthy, like the admirable caretaker and chaperon she is, has sent Miss Lewis and Miss Dodd in for an hour or two. It seems this blare of sunshine was playing pranks with their eyes."

"Too bad!" commented Roger. "We've had a wonderful voyage so far. Not a cloud."

"Well"—the lady disparaged the idea of marvel—"the southern route in May! What else would you expect?"

"Nothing certain about a sea voyage, even in southern waters and even in May," the young man contended. "But you've accounted for only a part of Miss Langworthy's group."

"Oh! Did I stop too soon?" She laughed outright, and, after a moment's reluctance, he joined in her mirth. After which confession, though he flushed beneath the tan of his voyage, his blue eyes met hers steadily enough.

"Too soon for my curiosity," he admitted.

"Well, then, Chloe Sylvester has gone

down into the steerage with the Italian medical commissioner."

"Oh!" said Roger flatly. After which he dragged his courtesy up from the depth in which it had been temporarily drowned. "I have stopped your walk," he said apologetically. "May I not go around with you?" Obviously he could not stand on guard before Chloe Sylvester's chair until she felt like returning to it.

"Charmed!" said Mrs. Lamont, and they fell into pace side by side.

"You know the Sylvesters, I think you said?" he began unblushingly to examine her. The quizzical smile that was so frequent with her played over her face.

"I used to know them rather well," she said. "Indeed, I was engaged, twenty-four or five years ago, to Chloe's father. My dear boy"—she interrupted her narrative style for one of impatient criticism—"don't drag out your sympathetic expression, your curtains-drawn, blinds-closed, crape-on-the-bell look. I'm not revealing a life's secret woe. I——"

"If I was putting on my mourner's aspect," the young man assured her, "it was in sympathy for Chloe's father. You know we men are reputed to stand by each other in a way foreign to your feminine comprehension, and I was merely pitying the man whom you threw over a couple of decades ago."

"Very neatly thought out, but not quite spontaneous enough," said the lady. "And, as a matter of fact, it was Richard Sylvester who threw me over—and a lucky thing for me that he did!"

"And for Mr. Lamont," insisted Roger, smiling.

The lady shrugged her shoulders

"I'm not at all sure that he'd agree with you," she confessed. "I'm a dictatorial, disagreeable sort of a person to live with. But Thompson bears with me pretty well. However, we were talking of the Sylvesters, not of the

Lamonts. Yes, I knew them very well a long time ago—as I've proved to you. But I've seen almost nothing of the family since the break with Richard. Not my fault, you understand. I was rather hot about it at first, but I never cherish rancor; only I could never persuade Agatha Sylvester, Dick's sister, that it wasn't a painful emotional experience for me to see a member of the family. And so our acquaintance gradually dwindled. I was sorry, for I liked her, though she was seven or eight years younger than I. She was a dear idealist. I suppose she's brought Chloe up in her own pattern—only I think I discern some new weavings in the girl."

"I had understood," said Mr. Hayes, with an air that he flattered himself was admirably discreet and casual, and a perfect mask for the avid curiosity that burned within him, "that Miss Sylvester had been brought up by her aunt. Her mother died early?"

"Not dead yet, as far as I know," snapped Mrs. Lamont.

"Oh!" ejaculated Mr. Hayes.

But the immediate satisfaction of his desire for information was denied him, for they had reached the bright-colored corner again. His eyes strayed hopefully toward it. Ah! White deck shoes of admirable cut projected beyond the edge of a steamer chair; a glistening white skirt nearly met them, leaving only a restrained section of white silk stocking visible; the cerise silk sweater that Miss Sylvester affected once more claimed its blessed privilege of infolding her pliant young figure. She had returned from her visit of inspection to the steerage. But—hang it!—so had the Italian medical commissioner, and he—blamed foreigner!—was stretched out in the empty chair beside her, and they were talking together with great animation and mutual absorption.

It was very obvious to Roger Hayes that the Italian officer was flagrantly neglecting his job, whatever it might

be, and he reflected gloomily upon the various forms in which governmental graft flourishes. He and Mrs. Lamont exchanged nods with the two, who vouchsafed them only the meager, absent-minded inclinations that courtesy demanded. There was nothing for them to do but to pass on.

"Queer-looking fellow, isn't he?" said the kind-hearted Mrs. Lamont, when they were beyond earshot.

"Oh, I don't know," replied Mr. Hayes, nobly observing the rules of the game. "Really rather handsome in his foreign way. And all these navy men have a good carriage. You know they hold a commission, these fellows? The navy loans its doctors to look after the immigrants going and coming."

Mrs. Lamont's smile commended his restraint in the use of his chance to abuse his rival. And then she sighed, a little abruptly.

"There's one thing I hope for her," she said. "For the charming Chloe, I mean. I hope she has somewhere lost the Sylvester standard."

"A severe one?" inquired Roger, the unnatural expression of noble forbearance with which he had sounded the Italian commissioner's praises fading, and his youthful features assuming again their usual expression of amused interest in the world about him.

"Spartan!" Mrs. Lamont was explosive. "Positively Spartan—sentimentally Spartan, if you know what I mean. Oh, we'd have worn each other to thread papers, poor Dick Sylvester and I, if he hadn't saved us from each other."

"Forgive my interruption," Roger broke in, "but you've been so good as to—to—er—to confide——"

"Bless the boy! He talks as if my jilting had been a musty secret!"

"Well, even if I was a conceited ass to imagine any unusual degree of confidence in what you've told me," Roger made amendment to his speech, "even

if you haven't told me any secrets—you have told me that—er—Miss Sylvester's father—er——"

"Threw me over? Yes," agreed the lady comfortably. "What then?"

"Well, only this. In the few novels my busy career has left me time to read, the gentleman of high standards, the high, severe, Puritan sort you imply, never did anything but keep his plighted word, no matter at what cost to himself!"

"Ah, you've been reading Victorian literature! The Sylvester spirit, in my day, applied its Puritan spirit according to modern methods. Richard would no more have thought of sparing himself the half hour in which he told me that he didn't love me, after all, than he would have allowed a note to go to protest. The truth, the exact, full truth—that was his hobby. And since he suddenly found himself destitute of love for me, he must acknowledge the fact on the instant. Of course, he left it to me to do what I thought best in the circumstances. He was conventional to that degree. But he wouldn't spare me the truth, and he wouldn't spare himself the telling of it. Poor Dick! I'm glad he didn't. He was quite right."

They had swung again on to the sheltered side of the deck where the chairs of Miss Langworthy's group of girls were ranged. Roger, trying to listen with polite interest to the middle-aged reminiscences of romance, observed that the hateful figure of the Italian commissioner had disappeared. Chloe lay in her chair alone. Mrs. Lamont also noted the glad fact.

"Chloe!" she called gayly, and turned out of the footway to wave the girl, who was springing out of her encumbering wraps to greet her, back into her chair. "May I leave Mr. Hayes in your charge? He has been very noble about guiding my tottering footsteps around the deck, but I'm going

below now for a nap, and I want to reward him."

"As far as that goes, to walk with Mrs. Lamont is its own reward," asserted Roger handsomely. "But for Miss Sylvester to take charge of me, when I'm thrown aside, is merely a tardy act of justice. She most shamelessly broke an engagement to walk with me after luncheon."

"You were toying with *hors d'œuvres* when I left the dining room," the girl answered, laughing. "I saw you! And I thought I'd have time to go down to the steerage with Doctor Marinelli before you came up. However, I'm all ready now." She made another attempt to rise.

"No, let me stay here, at least until some of the rest of your flock come to claim the place. Oh, thank you for being so kind to me, Mrs. Lamont."

And Mrs. Lamont, with her disregarded stories of the Sylvesters, moved on, and the two young persons were left looking at each other with great and obvious pleasure.

There was reason for the pleasure. Roger, lean, keen, smooth-shaven, the firmness and perhaps even severity of his features masked beneath his expression of friendliness and amusement, was a very satisfactory object for the young, soft eyes of a girl to watch. And as for Chloe, there could be no two opinions about it—she was adorable.

She was twenty-one or twenty-two, perhaps, tall and rounded and slim; her eyes' steadiness and depth were softened by the curl of her thick black lashes. Her broad, smooth brow, lovely as a child's, thoughtful as a seer's, was beautiful, robbed of solemnity, by the escaping tendrils of her soft, fine-spun black hair, and by the delicacy of her finely penciled black eyebrows. The oval of her cheek was stained a delicate crimson; her small, proudly cut nose, her beautifully chiseled lips, the model-

ing of her chin, the poise of her slim neck, all subtly spelled the noble pride of race. Humor was not lacking in the dimples that lurked in the corners of her mouth, but decision was not lacking in that feature, either. An alluring bundle of possibilities she seemed.

"Well?" said Roger, when he had filled his eyes full of her for a minute.

"Well?" she echoed him, the dimples at work in the corners of the red lips.

"Do you call that playing the game—to run away into the steerage with fascinating Italians when you have promised to walk with a plain, humdrum American chemist?"

"The game?" Again she echoed his words. Her soft voice gave them a music they had not had of themselves; her eyes half caressed him, half held him away. "What game are we playing, then?"

"You're right," he answered, with a new and sudden note of earnestness and tension in his voice. "It's no game. It's earnest—the deadliest sort of earnest to me. Chloe—ah, Chloe—How did they ever happen to give you that name, so sweet, so dovelike, so gay?"

"My father had just translated some Greek pastorals, to be exact," she told him, "in which Chloe was a frequent figure. And I believe that he and my mother had a temporary fondness for the name."

"Well, whatever the scholarly reasons, I'm glad they called you that! It's like—Venus' doves, isn't it? And the murmur of kisses? And—"

"And he calls himself a humdrum American chemist!" the girl informed the blue waters racing along beyond the deck rail.

"You're enough to make a full-fledged poet out of a—out of a floor-walker!" Roger assured her, with a return to his less flowery vein. "But what I began to say was that you were



"Chloe!" she called gayly. "May I leave Mr. Hayes in your charge? He has been very noble about guiding my tottering footsteps around the deck, but I'm going below now for a nap, and I want to reward him."

right in saying that this was no game——”

“I!” ejaculated Chloe.

“Well, if you are such a stickler for the letter of the text, I was quite right in saying so. It isn't a game. It's the most serious earnest I ever encountered in my life, the feeling I have for you, Chloe—the most serious!”

She watched him. The color deepened slightly on her rounded cheek, her gray eyes seemed to darken and soften mysteriously in the shadow of her lashes, her lips parted and smiled a little tremulously.

“You—you seem to be very familiar with my name?” she suggested after a second's wavering.

“And do you mind?” His voice was strained; to the tense desires of his youth, it seemed that the question and the answer were important.

“No,” she answered, with almost disconcerting candor. “I rather like it.”

“Chloe!”

“And I——”

“Rather like me?” he supplied hopefully. The color pulsed in his own face now; he drew nearer her, stooped, under pretext of readjusting her rugs, sought her hand under the beneficent protection of one. “Oh, Chloe, say it, say it!” he begged passionately, feeling the soft fingers in his own, and experiencing, with that contact, an overmastering, tender desire for her.

“Oh, there you are, Chloe!”

There was a flutter of white along the deck; the rest of Miss Langworthy's girls came gliding, running, sailing, into sight, with a glad babel of sound and information as to adventures in the crow's nest and a visit—by invitation—to the hurricane deck.

“To-night?” he besought her as the others bore down upon them.

She whispered: “Yes,” and he rose to pull out chairs and to arrange rugs with an air of excitement that these mild occupations scarcely justified.

During the rest of the afternoon, his heart sang hosannas. Surely she would not have made him that promise if she had not meant to hear him out; surely she would not hear him out unless—unless she longed to hear as he longed to speak. Good heavens! To think that nine days ago he had not known her, had not known that she existed, with her beauty, her soft fire!

Suppose—his wrists grew weak as water at the supposition—he had followed his first plan, and had gone home by way of Paris and Cherbourg, instead of sailing from Naples. Suppose he had defied the firm's suggestion that he come at this time. He had played, for half an hour, with the notion of informing the too urgent American Dye Company, of Newark, New Jersey, that he could see no reason for curtailing his holiday by two weeks merely because the treasurer of the corporation had decided to be married, and had left the works temporarily short-handed while he went honeymooning. Suppose he had been so shortsighted, so lacking in all brotherly sympathy as to do a thing like that!

He stopped short in his raptures to remember, with a curious sensation, that on receipt of that letter of recall, he had dubbed Hadley, the treasurer, a fool to go tying himself down at his age! And he had quoted the poet of the single men, Kipling, with his “he travels fastest who travels alone.” Great heavens, what an ass he had been!

He made himself almost foppishly fine for dinner, with fresh white flannels uncheaped by any previous wearing. He discovered himself gravely considering the question of a tucked versus a plain shirt; and the matter of his cuff links, it seemed to him, might have an important bearing on his future. He was severe with the boots boy over the condition of his white buckskin deck sneakers,

He had not meant to marry until he was thirty-five. He had quite seriously made up his mind to that age. He would be farther along in his profession then; he would be much more prosperous; he would be much more seasoned, no youngster to be caught by the spurious glitter of common metal, but a discerning man of the world. Ah, Chloe, Chloe! What a fool he had been, what a sublime, ridiculous ass! As if the true goddess would not stand forth unmistakably revealed whenever fate bade her appear! Wonderful, wonderful Chloe, with her deep, wise, alluring eyes, her adorably dented lips, the round desirability and grace of her! Thirty-five, indeed! To lose nine years—and such nine years! Of such pulsing vigor and joy as could never come again!

Still, he found it wise to remind himself, Chloe had not yet promised to marry him.

But she would! Oh, she would! She was going to. Chloe was no light-minded coquette of a girl. If Chloe had not intended to answer him according to his heart, she would not have whispered "yes" in that wonderful voice—frightened, unwilling, glad, eager— Oh, that wonderful, wonderful voice!

So, in the traditional fever of the young man in love, he made his way, by and by, into the dining room. The *König Adolphus* had spent a recent six months in dry dock, and had emerged with a cheerful restaurant dining room full of little cozy tables, instead of the long, old-fashioned family affairs. As Hayes passed among them, his eyes were fixed not upon his own table in one corner, but upon Miss Langworthy's, where her bright-hued flock of butterflies was already gathered.

There was to be a dance that night. Already the leeward deck was inclosing itself in buntings and banners, and adorning itself with rows of many-col-

ored electric lights. In preparation for this glad event, Miss Langworthy's girls had arrayed themselves more than ever like a Japanese flower garden—or was it a Dutch, Hayes wondered. Only Chloe still wore the white linen skirt she had worn all day and the soft, boyish, white silk shirt, with the loosely knotted scarf of cerise at the throat. Roger's heart leaped. She was not going to the dance, bless her! And lost in a happy, musing vision of the future, she had not even dressed for dinner—dear, dear girl!

But why had she not thought it worth while to "dress up" for the great experience that was to befall her? Even he had spent an unprecedented amount of time upon his toilet that evening. His heart began to sink. After all, she had only said that she would talk to him that night—flirt with him a little, perhaps. She might not have seen herself, by virtue of that monosyllable, already presiding over a house in one of the Oranges or Upper Montclair. She might—such is the inconceivable frivolity and light-mindedness of the female sex—not have regarded that "yes" as equivalent to the acceptance of an engagement ring—would she like emeralds?—and a wedding ring, and the name of Hayes, the position of his housekeeper and of mother to his children.

"I'm going to get this thing over," he told himself as he waved away the fourth consecutive course, to the concern of his table companions, "just as fast as I can."

From her table Chloe stole occasional glances toward his.

"I'd like to run my fingers through his nice hair," she told herself inconsequentially. "What a firm profile he has! I believe"—she smiled so that the dimples flashed into life—"that he'll get anything he wants. I—I—almost hope so. But—" And vague desires for

things unconnected with Roger Hayes floated nebulously before her vision.

"It is not," Miss Langworthy was stating firmly, apropos of what Chloe did not know, "as if there were no other career of either pleasure or profit or honor, except matrimony, open to women to-day."

Miss Langworthy's girls all hung upon her next words. As she helped herself to salad, she ran on with the story of the achievements of women in the last few decades.

"Of course," she admitted tolerantly, "for the majority of women marriage and motherhood will continue to be the accepted channel of activity. But it's no longer the only possible one. And certainly the time has passed when any young woman is obliged to marry in order to secure a livelihood." Her girls shuddered with dramatic fervor at such an unethical and unæsthetic idea.

"In fact," pursued the lady, "I strongly doubt if it will not be the custom, by the time the next generation is ready for marriage, for girls to enter it only as men do now—only after they have proved their worth as individuals, their value to society. After all, saying that a woman's work to society is chiefly in the children she bears is only one step removed from the harem standard which states that her value is in the pleasure she affords men. We are getting beyond that."

Many of Chloe's half-defined ideas seemed clarified by these chance utterances; and she felt fortified as she went, by and by, to the tryst. It was not so soon after dinner as Roger would have had it, for there was "a sunset" that night, and the sentimental passengers on the *König Adolphus*, instead of going to bed or to the lounge for their cards or to the smoking room for their drinks and cigars, insisted upon ambling all over the deck, oh-ing and ah-ing and making themselves generally objectionable. And the band was

damnable slow about gathering for the dance, and about tuning up and starting the blamed thing going. And even then one of those fool girls of Miss Langworthy's party insisted upon twining herself about Chloe like a vine and holding her there, just outside the circle of dancers. It was all maddening. But by and by it was over.

"See here!" he whispered, with almost proprietary fierceness, when he had finally disentangled her from the twiner, and had led her to the comparative quiet of the windward side of the ship. "See here, I can't say what I've got to say to you out here where we may be—shall be!—interrupted eighteen times. Come up to the wireless deck with me. There are lots of chairs and things. Give me your rugs. For I've got to finish what I want to say."

He stood—tall, straight, boyish, and yet masterful—in the bright light beside her chair. A little smile quivered over her lips at sight of him and at sound of him—so determined, so fierce, so pleading.

"Why," she temporized, her eyes half teasing, "will it take you so long to say what you have to say?"

"It will not!" He abandoned the plea for the upper deck. "It will take me exactly three seconds. I love you with all my heart. Will you marry me? Now you've got it, as expeditiously as possible."

Chloe gasped, and laughed.

"But I didn't want it so expeditiously!" she cried. "I—I think I should prefer it a great deal longer drawn out!"

"Chloe, don't torment me. I'm in earnest. This isn't flirtation—not on my part. I—I love you so! Please—please— Oh, Chloe!"

"Oh, my dear!" said Chloe, in a choked little voice. Chloe had never before seen a man grow white for any word that she might say, and her heart

was wrong by the momentary wretchedness in his eyes.

"My darling!" he cried triumphantly. She had said "my dear," and his blood pounded victoriously in his veins. He glanced along the deck, and that space being mercifully clear, he caught her in his arms and kissed her. "Now come!" he said commandingly.

Chloe followed to the upper deck with a question in her eyes.

"You see," she explained when they had reached a haven among masts and smokestacks and skylights, and she warded off his onslaught rather successfully for an amateur in such matters, "I'm not sure that I meant anything by what I said—by 'Oh, my dear'—except that I didn't want to hurt your feelings, and that I was afraid I had, and that I liked you very much."

"Do you mean that you don't want to marry me?"

Her eyes sought and marked all the details of him as he stood in the moonlight beside her. Youth and nature yearned for him, but Chloe was more than youth and nature. And she was determined to be honest.

"It isn't that I don't want to marry you exactly," she answered thoughtfully. "I rather *do* want to. No, no, please! I haven't said that I am going to."

"But if you 'rather do' want to!" jeered Hayes masterfully. "And if I do wholly and absolutely and everlastingly want you to—will you tell me, sweetheart, what is to prevent our marrying?"

"It's *only*," confessed Chloe reflectively, "that I should rather like to do a lot of other things besides."

"Such things as what?"

"Oh, thousands of things! I'd like to go on explorations—and you're not an explorer; so of course—or probably, at any rate—I couldn't."

"No, you couldn't," stated Mr. Hayes firmly. "But we could travel a lot—

not immediately, perhaps, but by and by, when I'm a little farther on in the chemical game, and am such a nabob that I don't have to keep office hours."

"M—m—m!" murmured Chloe doubtfully. "But it may take a long time for you to reach that desirable stage, may it not? And besides, that wouldn't be the same thing at all. It isn't what I mean. I'd like to be an explorer on my own hook, you know."

The house in Upper Montclair or one of the Oranges receded immeasurably into the distance.

"I'd like," pursued Miss Sylvester calmly, "oh, very much I'd like, to do all sorts of things, to have all sorts of adventures, before I marry. Marriage," she kindly explained to him, "is the end of a woman's chances for seeing life and the world as they are. I should like to make sure of seeing a few things first, of doing a few things first—"

"I have never believed," said Mr. Hayes, profoundly moved, "that all that feminist rot I've read in the papers was true. But evidently it is. Nothing except the prevalence of that sort of dissatisfied doctrine could account for a girl like you talking like this—a lovely girl, made for all the best and loveliest things in life, talking this advanced stuff!"

"My dear boy," said Miss Sylvester, somewhat patronizingly, "please don't let us descend to recriminations, and to foolish, mid-Victorian reiterations about woman's sphere and destiny, and all that. When you do, you make me feel less like—marrying you, if the proposition is still open."

"Chloe, do you mean—"

"I mean I've been trying to tell you how I feel, in the hope of making you understand why I don't know exactly what to answer you. I'm dying, at this very minute, dear boy, to run my fingers through your nice taffy-colored hair—"

"Ah, Chloe, Chloe!"

"But that doesn't mean that I don't want to go exploring as much as I ever did—or almost as much. And I—I—want you to kiss me again— No, no, no! Not until you've heard me through. But that doesn't mean I shouldn't like to teach history at the Wyncasset High School. They've offered me the job, and it really seems attractive to me. I specialized in history at Smith, you know, and I think I'd like teaching better than buying your groceries for you—for a while, anyway."

"You're flirting with me! You're unblushingly confessing that you would play with the signs and symbols of love—"

"Oh, my dear boy! Be honest with yourself—I don't ask you to be honest with me about it. But haven't you ever wanted to lay your hand upon a girl's head"—daringly she leaned forward and touched his locks—"or even to kiss her, without desiring to give up your work and your future for her sake? Indeed, without even desiring that she should share your work and your future? You know you have."

"Of course I have. But I'm a man—a brute, if you please—"

"And I," Chloe struck in steadily, "am a woman, of the same flesh and blood as you—and of the same ambitions." They stared at each other a long minute in the half light, under the stars.

"Then you won't marry me?" he said finally. There was a great, cold lump of lead in his chest.

"Not now," she answered. "I've got to have my taste of life, my taste of freedom first. You see, I've been honest with you—"

He came closer to her. He caught



"Don't be so frightened, Elsie," she counseled her comrades so careful as now,

her to him; he kissed her fiercely, passionately, striving to waken in her the fire of love that should destroy in its great flame all her other dreams and ambitions. But she pushed him back with her slim brown little hands.

"Oh, my dear," she whispered, "do you think that all the kisses in the world could alter what I've told you?" The wisdom, the knowledge in her voice made him draw aside from her again, chilled, baffled. "You see, it's only a little love in idleness, this of ours—just summer nights and sparkling waters. If you could make me feel that all the other things I've longed for



panion. "Of course there was never a time when captains after—after—that accident."

didn't weigh a feather in comparison with being yours, then I'd know that it was real love. Or if my inmost self cried out for you in danger or in loneliness as my indolent little wishes have learned to cry out for you these blue-and-gold days—then I'd believe in it. But as it is, how can I? You may think it all very shocking—I rather believe you do. But it's the truth. There are a million things"—she ended in a burst of girlish, defiant extravagance—"that I want to do so much that I don't want to marry you. I've tried to be honest with you."

"You've been perfectly honest," ad-

mitted Roger. He spoke without enthusiasm for honesty. "Of course, I think you're talking rot. I think you don't really know what you're saying, or what you want. It's this newfangled stuff—I always thought it was dissatisfied women who had missed everything that really makes a woman's life worth while who talked that kind of thing. But—well, they've impregnated you girls with it, maybe—with their dissatisfaction, their poisonous, revolutionary beliefs. But I can't help believing that you'll— Oh, Chloe, Chloe, come to me and let me teach you not to want anything in the world but me and my love for you! Come to me, come to me!"

When he ceased to lecture her, and cried out for her like that, it was hard for the girl to resist him. All the eternal motherliness in her heart welled up, and she longed to spare him his sorrow and to heal his hurts. But not for nothing was Chloe a Sylvester. She was obliged, by the very law of her nature, to try

to express all that struggled within her.

"Dear boy," she said, "dear, dearest boy, indeed, indeed, I can't! If I did, they would all be still there, the longings and the doubts and the ambitions. I'd stifle in the midst of them. The very love I have for you would choke to death in the midst of them. I know it."

"You admit you love me?" His bewilderment was extreme. "And yet—and yet—"

"I admit," Miss Sylvester corrected him, with a nice discrimination in language, "that I have an inclination toward you. But not a strong enough

one to make me forego all my other inclinations. Not a strong enough one to marry on. So——"

"You're going to marry me, you know!" He interrupted her to speak with an assurance that should stagger her into a proper subjection. "I don't know when, but I'll never let you go—never, never!"

"Well," said Chloe, smiling faintly in the silvery darkness, "I think I want you to feel that way."

It occurred to him later, when, in the cabin he was sharing with a young priest who had been visiting Rome and who had applied for passage too late to find other quarters, he was removing the gaudy raiment he had donned early in the evening with such high hope, such glad certainty, that Chloe, in that speech, sounded almost like a finished coquette. How she had played with him—firing him, chilling him, luring him, rebuffing him! Then he remembered the deeper tones of her dear voice, the sweet gravity of her brow, the earnestness and nobility of her lips in repose; such a girl could not be a flirt, a mere flirt!

"Experimenting with her life—and I happened to get into it, somehow."

He had reached this final analysis of Chloe before young Father Gregory came in. Father Gregory was always late in coming into the cabin at night, always early out in the morning. He had a passion for the sea, it seemed, and he could not sufficiently fill his eyes with its myriad changefulness. Of course, by the usual irony of fate, when he was at home, he was stationed in Kansas City, about as far from the sea as could be achieved. But to Roger there was no tragedy in that case of thwarted desire. And he envied the young man who had no more gnawing form of baffled love against which to contend.

"Just the same, I'm going to get her!" he declared behind what might be de-

scribed as the clenched teeth of his spirit.

CHAPTER II.

It was the accident of weather that accomplished his heart's wish for him and landed him Chloe's accepted lover. Moonlight and silver seas, the flash of jeweled rainbows in the spray, the beauty of leagues of sunset burning over the lonely waste of waters—all these traditional breeders of romance had failed to fulfill his desire for him. Nevertheless, it was the weather that was to give him his chance.

Two nights before the *König Adolphus* was due to dock, the passengers, an hour or so past midnight, were awakened by that most doleful of all sounds—the long, melancholy blast of the fog-horn. Only a month or two before there had occurred one of the great tragedies of the fog, the sinking of a French liner off the Newfoundland coast, with every circumstance of horror. The nerves of the most philosophical sea voyager were in no condition to remain calm when that long, dread signal blew. The *König Adolphus* slowed down obviously. By and by there was scarcely a tremor of her great engines; she had all but stopped.

Chloe, in her berth, held her breath. She was frightened, she knew. She hated cowards, but she found herself one. Why? She had been brought up to regard death as no terrible thing, provided only it were met courageously. In her daydreams she had thought of dying in some splendid moment—saving life, yielding her own in the very full tide of her existence for some glorious reason. It had seemed to her that such an end would be far finer than to lie, weak and indifferent, in her bed, and to slip out of the world upon some night breeze as it wafted out of the sick room, benefiting the world no whit by her going. Youth does not fear death; it fears only the blotting out of

experience. So that when she found herself rigid in her berth, with her hands like ice against her throat, and her lips quivering so that she could not speak, she was amazed. She was so amazed that the wonder of it calmed a little the pounding of her heart. Elise Drew, in the berth below her, began to whimper faintly, with long-drawn breaths. The sound helped to restore Chloe to herself.

"I'm going to see if I can see anything," she managed, though with chattering teeth, to inform her roommate.

She slipped across the cabin floor to the sofa beneath the porthole. She peered out into the night. The state-room was on one of the lower levels of the steamer, and the water was visible through it, curling away from the ship's side in a weak little wash of foam. But so heavy was the fog that there was no blackness of free water beyond the faint gleam of the wash.

"Don't be so frightened, Elise," she counseled her companion, feeling more like herself after the slight, customary exertion of her muscles. "Of course, there was never a time when captains were so careful as now, after—that accident. And this is a German ship, and there's German discipline aboard. And besides, there are always fogs—and think how few accidents."

But every half second the dismal proclamation of the foghorn sounded. And to the strained ears of the two girls it seemed that other foghorns were answering the signal. In that great, gray, enveloping, cruel thing outside there, were there other vessels feeling their way, trying to avoid one another, coming, perhaps, every instant, closer? Might there, at any instant, come a jarring, a grating, a quiver, all through the ship—and then—what?

"I'm going to dress and go on deck, if they'll let me," cried Chloe suddenly, feeling the situation unbearable. "I—I must!"

What she was saying to herself was that she must find Roger, must be with him when—if—that horrible moment came. And with the urgent desire for him, there came upon her the belief that she must love him truly, must love him as women loved the men to whom they gave their dreams, their ambitions, their lives. Else why, in this first cowardly moment of her life, did she feel so strong a need of him?

"I'm coming, too," said Elise, and scrambled up to dress in sketchy fashion.

They crept out of their cabin by and by, their ulsters on, scarfs tied over their heads. They found that half the passenger list had been of the same mind as they. In the dining room the indefatigable band was at work, playing stirring, cheerful music. No passengers were allowed on deck at the moment, but they swarmed into the lighted, cheerful room and felt strangely comforted by the presence of their kind. At the head of the companionway, Roger Hayes stood. His face cleared when he saw Chloe. He ran down the steps to meet her.

"I was just going down to mount guard outside your door," he said. They had barely spoken to each other for two days. Now their hands met and clung together as if each had long sought the particular shelter the other afforded. Their eyes embraced. "We're all right, of course. But I wanted to be near you."

"I came out," she said simply, "to be with you. I wanted to be with you—if anything happened."

He looked down at her with great happiness and tenderness.

"Nothing will happen," he said, "but we shall be together always."

"Yes," she answered.

There was a deep calm and joy in both their hearts, which the long, melancholy blasts could not chill, which the artificial good cheer of the band could

not jar. They had found each other; they held each other. Time and space and the grim intent of destiny were no longer any concern of theirs. The moment was, for them, eternity, and love had driven out fear and every other trifling emotion.

When the dreaded shock came, as come it did, they were tranquil still, held in that trance of self-surrender that makes all other surrenders seem of secondary importance. When the long shiver ran through the great ship, they drew closer to each other, and their shining eyes still told each other the same thing—that, since they had found each other, life itself was but a trifle to lose. They could not realize to what a pitch of exaltation fright and danger had lifted them; they had no experience to tell them that it is in the power of apprehension to sharpen all the emotions, all the imaginative faculties, and that in what they thought the supreme hour of a wonderful love, they were still in the sway of that perception of peril which had blinded them to common things. So, sometimes, in summer midnight storms, the landscape is a new, undreamed-of thing in the lightning flashes.

Of the rush of feet along the deck, of the call of orders, of the determined surge of the pent-up passengers toward the outer air, of the shrieks and swoons of terrified women, and the rough, rasped oaths of men, Chloe and Roger were but partly conscious. But by and by it dawned on Roger that in the red-faced, chunky, little third officer, who was so belligerently commanding his passengers to stay where they were, who was still denying the women entrance to the decks, and who was permitting only a few chosen men to go out upon them, there was something of reassurance for the *König Adolphus*.

"We haf not been damaged! We haf not been damaged!" he kept yelling. And finally, with a burst of fury:

"Damn you! We haf not been damaged! Yes, madam, there has been a collision. We haf run down der Bath steamer *Celestine*, bound for the Azores with a mixed cargo, and we are standing by to give her aid 'if she needs it. That is all. We haf not been damaged! We haf not been damaged! And der fog is lifted. No one is allowed on deck at present."

By and by he had the information beaten into even the most panic-stricken of them. By and by their ears took note of the fact that the foghorn had ceased to blow. By and by they were looking at one another sheepishly, wondering just what sort of figures they had cut in the eyes of the community—as the ship represented the community—in the hour of excitement and danger. Some wives looked searchingly at some husbands, as if seeing them for the first time; some husbands evaded the conjugal eye; some readjustments of old opinion were made.

But Chloe and Roger looked at each other with smiling content.

"I'll take you to your room, my darling," he told her, when the stewards had done their inevitable part in every maritime situation by dashing about with trays of bouillon and sandwiches. "And you shall tell me good night at the door, and shall promise to dream of the time when we shall never have to part again. Soon, soon, my dearest girl!"

At the cabin door he kissed her very tenderly, almost reverently, with none of the fierceness of desire he had manifested on the night she had refused to marry him. Love had grown sweeter, more solemn than he had known it could be.

And Chloe, still in her wonderful daze, went in to the narrow room she had left that she might seek him. There was, she felt sure, no space left in her heart for anything but the deep tenderness and joy that utterly filled it.

CHAPTER III.

The number of times that Chloe had gone in and out of the big, stately door, with its fanlight and its sidelights, its Greco-Georgian trimmings, its correct tubs of laurel at either side, had been innumerable. But when Major MacMurtha assisted her from the taxi under the elms at the foot of the long lawn, and she ran up the path to the door that swung open for her, she was conscious of a totally new sensation connected with it.

Never before had her comings-in and her goings-out awakened in her any faint recollection of her first sight of that heavy, paneled, dark-green slab of wood, swung so truly between its white columns, adorned with its massive knob and its ancient knocker of pale old brass. To-day, hurrying in to Agatha Sylvester, her heart full of eagerness for the dear woman who had brought her up, the moment's rapture of expectation was suddenly interrupted. She saw the eagle that was the knocker from a new—no, an old—angle; she was being carried in some one's arms, a little girl, up to that wide door. The mellow lights of the hall behind the glass shone pleasantly out upon the snowy path; the knocker gleamed in the reflection from an arc light on the street beyond; and some one held her very close, very close and tight, before he sounded through the house his announcement that he waited admission.

Almost as rapidly as the vision of that long-forgotten evening had obtruded upon her, it vanished, and she was in Agatha's arms. Agatha had not met her in New York, being still a semicripple from an ugly fall upon the ice in March; Agatha had delegated the duty of seeing her through her country's cruel customs to Major Thomas MacMurtha, who had been, for fifteen years at least, as Chloe was prepared to testify, the picker-up of the

things that Agatha had dropped, the runner of Agatha's errands, the faithful, ever-present Old Dog Tray to a lady who would have indignantly repudiated the charge of selfish willfulness or coquetry in any of her human relations.

"Dearest!" cried Agatha, folding her tall girl to her heart. Then she released her at once. Agatha was a sentimentalist, but she was also a Puritan, and a daughter of the Puritans; since her undisciplined fondness cried out so loudly for the arms and the lips and the cool, rounded cheek of her girl, that was obviously a longing to be denied. But Chloe was not yet so true to type as her aunt; with breathless little laughter and crying, and inarticulate murmurs of delight, she threw her arms again about the lady's neck.

"And, oh, dearest, were you frightened when you read of the collision? And when did you get my wireless saying we were perfectly safe? Ah, major, you're carrying that amphora and all those silly Gibraltar baskets! Ah, Annie, how do you do? You're looking so well— Annie, do take that junk from Major MacMurtha—"

"Suppose we adjourn to the library," suggested Agatha, with her magnificent imitation of tranquil calmness. "Annie, take Miss Chloe's hat and things. Are you sure you don't want to go and change at once, Chloe dear? Or to rest—or something?"

"After the terrible strain and hardship of a two-hour ride in an American Pullman?" Chloe jeered at her aunt. "No, I don't think I do want to go and change at once or to rest or anything. You bad woman, you, why didn't you ever tell me about your ankle? I really had a perfectly horrid ten minutes before we docked, while I was watching the pier and saw only the major and no you."

"I didn't want to worry you, or to spoil your enjoyment," replied Agatha.



"Dearest!" cried Agatha, folding her tall girl to her heart.

"And it was really nothing at all. It serves me right for being a foolish old thing. I began skating again last winter for the first time in—many years." Her voice faltered and then went on stalwartly: "And I got this for my pains!"

"But not until March!" Major MacMurtha reminded her eagerly. "And the skating really did her good, Chloe, before—"

"Of course it did! Bully for you, Agatha!"

But Chloe's voice was a trifle surprised. She looked at her aunt with

a fresh interest. Agatha was a lovely woman—of course, Chloe had always known that, since she was old enough to know anything outside the small circle of her own wants and feelings. And Agatha was young—yes; of course she was young, as youth went nowadays. She was still under forty. She had been only in the early twenties when Chloe had come here to Wyncas-set to live—only about as old as she, Chloe, was now. But already dedicated to sorrow and service, one of those "nuns of grief," as some one has called them. Catch Agatha being any

more definite kind of a nun, with her pride in her Calvinistic forbears!—Her lover, her affianced, had just been killed in one of the few fatal engagements of the Spanish War. Chloe remembered dimly that her aunt had been wont to hold her tight in black-garbed arms and to whisper in her impatient little ear:

"You were sent to me, my baby! You were sent to me to be my comfort, to give me life!"

Of course Chloe had not understood the passionate sorrow—to whose cure she ministered; she had managed generally, after the heartless fashion of childhood, to squirm out of the arms that clasped her so tightly, and to run away from that tense whisper and that atmosphere of melancholy. Selfish little beast she had been! Selfish little beasts all children were! Ah, well, she thought, she had made it up to dear Agatha a little, in her older period! Dear, dear Agatha!

And what would dear, dear Agatha say—how would she feel—that was the really more important aspect of the matter—when she heard that her tall girl, for whose home-coming she had been hungry during the four years of college and the year abroad, just ended—how would she ever bear the news that her girl meant to marry an enterprising young chemist and go to live in a suburb of Newark, New Jersey?

"She's looking awfully well, isn't she, Tom?" Agatha was saying, when Chloe came out of her second's brown study over that little problem in human relations. And Tom MacMurtha was saying that she did, indeed, look awfully well.

"First of all," Agatha commanded her, "tell us about the collision. I had your wireless long before daylight. I didn't know of any collision until I had that line about your safety. In fact"—Agatha laughed—"the reassuring news came at half past two o'clock in the morning."

"And, knowing your aunt as well as you do, you'll not be surprised to hear that she spent the next hour in wild anxiety concerning what danger had threatened you. She even called me up on the telephone at the club about it."

"And Tom, like the angel he is," supplemented Agatha, tossing a bone to Old Dog Tray, "long-distanced one of the New York papers in which he has a convenient editorial friend, and found out. Then I went back to sleep. But tell me all about it, Chloe, my dearest. In the middle of the night, wasn't it? And exactly what did you do? And exactly how did you feel?"

Chloe blushed vividly.

"At first I felt horribly frightened—oh, quite ignominiously frightened. Stiff, you know, and with my heart pounding and my silly teeth chattering. And so I got up and dressed. And went out—I mean out of the stateroom; they wouldn't let us out on deck. And when I found myself—with—people again, why, everything—quieted down. I wasn't afraid any more." Her eyes grew mistily luminous, as those of one who looks back upon a miracle.

She didn't hear the murmur of admiration for her courage with which Agatha greeted this recital. She was thinking that Agatha was going to be horribly lonely when she, Chloe, left her. It was all very well to try to solace herself with the thought that Agatha had lived in the town from time immemorial, that her forbears had lived there, that every one knew her and she knew every one. The truth was, as Chloe was perfectly and poignantly aware, that since Wallis Lestranger's death, Agatha had lived for exactly one thing, and that one thing was her niece Chloe.

Agatha was the intense and the intensive type; she was born to pour herself out in one deep, narrow channel of devotion. It made her the wonderful person she was—that gift of concentra-

tion in love and service; it made her—Chloe's eyes rested on Tom MacMurtha, and she sighed—it made the wonderful Agatha selfish, blind. How she had accepted the doglike devotion of that long, lean, melancholy fellow there—he was more grizzled and more lined than he had been a year ago when Chloe went away—with perfect indifference all the long years since he had come home from Cuba with Wallis' trinkets saved for her, and Wallis' last words about her religiously remembered.

Wallis' memory and Chloe had been the two great things in Agatha's life after that day. She treated the unswerving love and constant service of the major as she treated the lambent-eyed, silent affection of her horse or her dog. Wonderful, wonderful, the plumbless depths of selfish possibility in even the finest human hearts! Chloe, who had been reared in the creed of lifelong constancy to one true love, began to wish that Agatha had rewarded Tom MacMurtha's devotion. Then, with unexpected clarity of analysis, she perceived that she wished it chiefly so that it might be easier for her to leave her aunt alone in Wyncasset, so that she might follow, with few pangs of remorse, the new beacon that lighted the path to Newark, New Jersey. Strange what a complicated thing existence was!

By and by, after a half hour of talk in which she had borne her share in spite of the new preoccupation of her mind, the major was taking his leave. Agatha was smiling her kind, careless smile, shamelessly indifferent to his going, now that she had her girl at home again.

"Won't you come in to dinner to-morrow night, Tom?" she said, with that detached benevolence of hers. "I shan't ask you for to-night"—her eyes dwelt lovingly upon Chloe—"but do come to-morrow and hear this girl's tales of her *wanderjahr*."

"I'm awfully sorry," said Tom, hon-

estly miserable to decline the skimpy little invitation, "but there's a banker's convention in New York to-morrow and the next day, and I have to go down for the First National. If Schnell weren't away, I could manage it."

He was very downcast at the thought of missing one little miserable chance of sitting at table with Agatha. But she merely smiled brilliantly and absently upon him, and said, from some plane where her spirit soared, barely conscious of him:

"Well, when you come back, some night. Good-by, and thank you a thousand times for meeting Chloe for me in the city."

"Yes, Major MacMurtha," chimed in Chloe, "it was most awfully kind of you."

"It was nothing at all. I was delighted—of course," said Tom MacMurtha, and went out of the room and out of the broad hall and down the path to the gate under the elms. Agatha had forgotten him before he got himself well outside the house. Her large, bright, hazel eyes were fixed with a very ecstasy of tenderness upon Chloe.

"I thought he'd never go!" she cried ungratefully. "He's dear, of course, but—scarcely discerning."

"He's spoiled you, Agatha," commented Chloe. She had firmly declined the auntly prefix when a small child, and she had never been taught to adopt it since.

Agatha Sylvester looked with a pained surprise at her niece.

"You aren't serious?" she said.

"Oh, no, not very! But—it's really sad to see him, Aggie. He adores you—"

"Chloe!" Agatha's still blooming cheek was suffused with a brighter color, bespeaking rather annoyance than embarrassment. "I am—really—"

"You think I'm a little indelicate?" suggested Chloe. She dimpled slightly.

"But why not face the truth? He does adore you, and he spends his life in seeking opportunities to do you little services. And it's a pity, a great pity. When a man has the capacity for whole-hearted devotion like that, it seems a shame he shouldn't get something out of it."

"Even if what you say about Tom were so," said Agatha primly, "surely a great emotion is its own everlasting reward. I—I am sure that I believe it." She spoke in a low tone.

"Dearest!" cried Chloe, repenting her teasing. She crossed the room and sat down beside her aunt, slipping her arm about the waist of the elder lady. It was still a girlish waist, slim and pliant. Agatha Sylvester was still a very desirable woman. "I didn't mean to be—impertinent. Less than ever, dear, less than ever do I want to do anything to displease you."

Her voice shook a little. Agatha caught the sound. She sat back, turning her face so that she could look straight into Chloe's eyes.

"Chloe!" she cried tragically and with instant perception, instant intuition, of the important revelation that hovered in the air between them. "Chloe! What do you mean?" Her face had grown white, her eyes were very dark and tragic in the midst of the whiteness. "Surely—surely—you haven't come home just to—just to—" Then she rallied the well-drilled forces of her nobility. Not thus should she be speaking. "You have something to say to me, Chloe? Some—happy news for me?" She twisted her lips pathetically into a smile.

"I—I— Oh, Agatha!"

The girl broke down suddenly and put her head upon the older woman's breast. The sense of all the confused currents of life, of all the loves and losses and renunciations that are woven into it, overwhelmed her. She wanted to be high and worthy of her lineage,

worthy of the beautiful, austere creed of unselfishness in which Agatha had trained her, and in which Agatha herself walked, unworldly and sublime. She wanted that almost as ardently as she had sometimes wanted to strike out across the new, barely charted ways for women. And all these aspirations and ambitions were converging merely upon a keen-cut young man who expected to install her in a suburban house by autumn.

"My dear, my dear!" said Agatha, mechanically stroking Chloe's head as it lay upon her breast. But she spoke in a stricken voice. Had Chloe been her own daughter she would probably have looked forward to her marriage, no matter how the actual parting might have wrung her heart; but had she been Chloe's mother, she would have had other ties of happiness with the earth—a husband, other children. No. It was different. Chloe had come to her when she was desperately wounded by grief; Chloe had been her healing and her joy; Chloe had been her pride and her love. It was very different. She had believed all through the years that her heart was in Wallis' grave, but in reality she had spent it all upon Chloe.

"If you please, Miss Agatha——" began a voice from the hall.

Chloe sat up with a start. Agatha turned her gray face toward Annie, the maid.

"Yes, Annie?" she said.

"That lady I told you about is back—Mrs. Janvier."

"I can't see her now, Annie." Agatha spoke as impatiently as she ever permitted herself to speak. "I can't see any one at present. Please explain to her, and ask her to excuse me. Or—wait a minute. Say that I am engaged and cannot see any one at present, and ask her if she will kindly let me know what her business with me may be."

"Yes'm," said Annie obediently. She

recrossed the hall that separated the library and dining room on one side of the house from the drawing-room and conservatory on the other. In an instant she came back, consternation on her face.

"She says—she says it isn't really necessary for her to see you at all. It's Miss Chloe she really wants to see."

Behind Annie's broad-waisted figure, there appeared in the doorway another figure—slight, rather graceful, overdressed; the face rouged, dark-eyed, and keen.

"Pawdon my intrusion," said the owner of the figure, with exaggerated elegance of diction and manner, "but I thought we could proceed so much more—aw—more expeditiously, if I saw you at once. I assure you I will detain you only for the briefest fraction of time."

Agatha arose, very erect and haughty, and stared at her.

"I am very much engaged," she said sharply, for one so gentle. "It is quite impossible for me to see you at present. Annie——"

She indicated that Annie was to lead the intruder to the front door again. But the lady held her position with admirable firmness. She vouchsafed no look to the mistress of the house from the keen eyes beneath the splashily patterned black lace veil that she wore, but gazed only at Chloe, lovely as an opening flower.

"Chloe!" she murmured, with an almost gelatinous sweetness. "Chloe! How sweet you are, my dear! How lovely! How like! I am your aunt, too, dear. I am your mother's sister, and I come bearing a message from your heartbroken mother!"

She finished her dramatic little speech with the air of a footlight favorite waiting for the gallery applause that always followed a noble line. Agatha sat down suddenly, white to her healthy lips. Chloe's gray eyes widened and widened.

"My mother?" she faltered, after what seemed to her an eternity of silence.

"Ah, you have been taught to hate that sacred name, I fear," mourned Mrs. Janvier.

"Will you sit down, Mrs.—er—— I am sorry, I forgot the name my maid announced——"

"Janvier—Genevieve Janvier," repeated the new-found aunt, with apparent satisfaction in the mellifluous flow of the syllables.

"Mrs. Janvier," went on Agatha, with an effort. "Annie, you may leave us. And now, Mrs. Janvier, what is the message you claim to bring my niece from some one whom you claim to be her mother?"

Agatha had not known until that moment that she could address a fellow creature in tones of such scathing doubt, such bitter hostility. But never before had she been threatened in the possession of the dearest treasure of her heart.

"You speak contemptuously, Miss Sylvester," remarked the caller, still with her air of facing an audience and maneuvering for the spotlight. "You mock at what you do not understand. You are, I believe—I may say that I know—unmarried; you have never borne a child; you do not understand the unquenchable fires of a mother's love and longing."

In spite of herself, Agatha had preserved, through her long career as a saint, some slight sense of humor. It came to her aid now. It may have been spiced with bitterness, but it relieved, for a second, the intolerable anxiety the situation held for her.

"Good heavens, Mrs. Janvier, don't go on talking as if you were reading 'East Lynne' or something of that sort. It's scarcely to be wondered at that I don't know much about the unquenchable fires of which you speak so fluently, not only because of my own lack

of experience, but because of your sister's behavior. You recall, I suppose, the circumstances under which my niece came here to live with me?"

Mrs. Janvier shook her head and smiled pityingly upon the spinster.

"How little you understand!" she repeated softly. "How little! My sister Gwendolin had the artistic temperament—has it still, I may say. She was a soaring spirit, a true artist, a passionate, beauty-loving soul! She could not be bound down to the stupid domestic routine which your brother—a very worthy man, I have no doubt, Miss Sylvester, but totally unsuited to Gwen!—bound her down to. She chafed at the bonds; she could not breathe in the close atmosphere. She felt that there was no true marriage without love. She realized that she had made a mistake—a bitter, bitter mistake! They were married, not mated——"

"My good woman, spare me the rigmarole!" interjected Agatha. "Your sister"—she blushed and looked appealingly at Chloe—"your sister was faithful to her marriage with my brother. She left him, eloping with— Ah, why do you come here to revive all this? The court gave my brother entire custody of the child—and its mother never even entered an objection to the arrangement! Please don't come here talking of mother love to me!"

"But it is mother love—mother longing which nothing but her child could satisfy—that has sent me here! Gwendolin is ill in New York. She yearns for her child. All the years that she has spent apart from her seem barren, wasted! She begs"—the large, dark eyes fixed themselves on Chloe now—"that her little daughter will come to her."

"It is preposterous!" said Agatha, but she spoke mechanically. She waited to hear Chloe echo her words or her thought with even more decisive expression. But the girl was utterly si-

lent, staring at the two in a sort of stupefaction. "Chloe," cried Agatha sharply, "tell her that it is preposterous, preposterous!"

Chloe turned her eyes from one to the other of them.

"I—I must think," she stammered.

"Ah! There spoke her father's cool, calculating blood!" observed Mrs. Janvier across her invisible footlights. "How differently would poor Gwendolin's nature have responded!"

"Of course," said Agatha, rallying a little, "we have no proof whatever that—you will have to forgive my plain speaking—that what you say is true."

"I was prepared for doubt," asserted Mrs. Janvier sadly.

She dived into a gold-plated bag that dangled from her wrist, and produced several things—a photograph, which she handed to Agatha, a slim package of letters, which followed, a ring with an inscription inside it. Agatha looked at the faded picture, and her face grew even whiter. She closed her eyes. She had loved her brother very dearly, and the sight of his young, clear-cut, high-bred face staring at her across the empty years brought back all the aching of her loss.

If only, if only he had not fallen in love so disastrously with the girl who was pictured by his side—a girl all lovely curves and daring glances, which not even the mechanical processes of the photographer's art had been able to spoil, and which not even time had been able to fade to ghostliness. If only that fatal passion had spared him! If only he had married Helen Jewell! If only all the wretched, tragic affair were to be reconsidered, relived! But it was done, and here was its consequence—her library polluted by the presence of a pretentious ignoramus, to put it mildly! Her darling threatened with undesirable—with contaminating—association. Herself robbed, defrauded of all her joy!

She had utterly forgotten that when this creature had forced her way into the room, she had been just about to listen to Chloe's tale of a sundering between them more complete than any that this tardy pretense of mother love could effect. She looked at the letters—at their superscriptions only; she would not for worlds have profaned her dead brother's love for his wife by an inquisitive eye—and the superscriptions were enough. At first, with postmarks nearly a quarter of a century old, they were to "Miss Gwendolin Grayson"; then, by and by, they were to "Mrs. Richard Mather Sylvester." And the heavy hoop of gold—it looked fresh and unworn for all the years that had elapsed since the inscription was engraved within it—bore their initials and the date—the dreadful date—of their marriage!

"You recognize the picture?" said Mrs. Janvier smoothly. "And the handwriting?"

"I never saw your—my brother's wife," said Agatha. "I recognize my brother's photograph."

"To be sure," said Mrs. Janvier slowly, meditatively, not at all spitefully. "To be sure. Your family never received Gwendolin."

"No," returned Miss Sylvester calmly.

"Well, my dear," said Mrs. Janvier, speaking more briskly and naturally than she had yet spoken and turning toward Chloe, "are you coming with me? Or am I to tell your suffering, heartbroken mother that you are all Sylvester? That you have no kind feelings, no warm—er—currents in your blood?"

"I must think," said Chloe slowly, for the second time. "I must think. If you will leave me my—your sister's—address, I—I will let her know what I decide to do. By the way—you say that she is ill?"

"A complete nervous breakdown," an-

swered Chloe's new aunt, with profound satisfaction. "She feels her parts so, Gwen does! She gives herself so! A true artist! Why, she comes off the stage sometimes just a rag—just a wet rag! Worn out by her emotions! She throws herself into every part so."

"Oh! She's on the stage?" said Chloe slowly.

"They never told you even that much about her!" cried Mrs. Janvier accusingly.

"I did not know so much to tell," said Agatha coldly. "From the time my brother was divorced from her, I have been glad to know nothing whatever of her. I—I think that Chloe knew her mother had been on—on the stage—before her marriage—in—in musical comedy. And—what is her stage name?"

"Gwendolin Grayson, of course! She never changed that in any—er— She never changed that!"

"Oh! I haven't ever happened to see it in the newspapers," said Agatha, unconsciously cutting.

"You would have if Gwen was willing to do what some do to get ahead," said Mrs. Janvier, again relapsing into a natural manner. "But she has always remembered who and what she was! Well—Chloe?"

"I must think," said Chloe steadily. "Give me the address, if you please."

Mrs. Janvier gave the address of a hotel on One Hundred and Twenty-fifth Street.

"You know, Chloe—although I do not wish to influence you in a matter where your own heart and conscience must decide," said Agatha Sylvester, as the caller arose to end her devastating visit, "your mother has no claim whatever upon you. She— Your father, although he was the wronged and outraged party in the divorce suit, made very generous provision for her. There was no earthly reason, beyond his own chivalry, why he should have done so.

He was taking care of you, and she— Oh, I hate to stain your mind with all this stuff, my dear, my baby! But she had eloped with a man of considerable wealth. There is no claim upon you—none! She hasn't cared whether you were alive or dead. Oh, Chloe, Chloe! There is no claim upon you!"

"Don't feel so, Agatha, dear," said Chloe slowly. "Don't feel so upset. I shall simply have to think."

Somehow the woman was out of the door at last, and the two Sylvesters stood looking into each other's eyes.

"I always thought that she was dead," said Chloe.

"Don't reproach me, don't reproach me!" the older woman pleaded. "I—I believed it myself! I could not help but believe it: I couldn't think that she could be alive and not come to see you, not make some sign of life or interest—even though the law had given you all to Dick. I couldn't believe in such a woman. You were such a dear little thing, Chloe! So chubby and round-eyed and grave and sweet! Oh, how could I help believing that she was dead—dead in reality as she was dead to you by law? Don't reproach me, dear; don't reproach me! You know that when you were old enough to understand anything at all, I told you that it had been an unhappy marriage, and that they had separated, your father and mother! What need was there for me to tell you more? She had made no sign of life for more than ten years! She had made no sign of life even when Dick died. How could I think— Ah, don't reproach me!"

"I'm not reproaching you, Agatha," said Chloe patiently. There was a heaviness about her mind and heart, about



"You are using my name in a way that is offensive to me. And, as I am very tired—" She arose.

her limbs as well. It seemed in another existence that she had run up the path from the elm-shaded street, full of rapture to have her foot again upon her own soil, full of gladness and love and expectation.

Her mother!

CHAPTER IV.

For fifteen years, now, and over, Agatha Sylvester had been wont in every emergency of her life to call upon the assistance of her faithful friend, Thomas MacMurtha. She had known him for a much longer period even than that. Wyncasset was a democratic place, and the early education of the young of all classes was obtained from the same excellent public sources. Agatha had attended the same red brick school building with Tommy MacMurtha, although he was her senior by some five or six years and did not sit in the same classes with her. But he knew her; he was the son of the market gardener and nurseryman on the outskirts of the city,

and he frequently brought the vegetables to the houses that his father supplied, among them to old Judge Richard Mather Sylvester's.

He had been a thoughtful, awkward, freckled boy in those days, and he had showed no ability either as a gardener or as a petty trader. So, when he had graduated from the high school, his father, who had prospered, had thought that there was nothing for it but "to make a gentleman of Tom," which had been, to his mind, a confession that his son did not amount to much. So the boy had had a course at Yale, had read a little law with an old-fashioned firm in New Haven, and had taken his degree. Then he had rather brilliantly ferreted out a leakage for the First National Bank, in which the old nurseryman had been by this time a director. And then he had gone to the Spanish War and had restored all the paternal pride in him by coming home a major, with a scar and much honor. It had been at that point, as has already been said, that he had taken his place in Agatha Sylvester's life, and he had never left it.

He was manager and treasurer of the bank now—a rather melancholy-looking man, slow, kind, dryly humorous on occasion, rather given to silences. The whole town knew that he adored Agatha; the whole town suspected that he had the habit of offering her his hand and heart at stated intervals. In this they were mistaken. Agatha had succeeded so thoroughly in impressing upon him the notion that she was wed to sorrow that it never occurred to him to ask her to make other nuptials. He adored her, in part, for that very fineness of soul which made it impossible to think of her as false to an early troth. Yet he hardly found his life satisfactory.

He was in his office back of the outer room of the bank one morning, about three weeks after Chloe's return from

Europe. Agatha had been particularly inaccessible and mysterious during that time, with eyes that commanded him to leave her to herself and to consider himself a rank outsider. He had been vaguely troubled by the trouble he divined in her. He wondered if Chloe had been doing anything silly or indiscreet. Girls at that age nowadays sometimes went off the handle a little, as boys alone had been used to do in an older generation. There was that pretty daughter of Laurens', the cashier, who had rather flamboyantly fallen in love with "a married man." There was that girl of James', the lawyer, who was making street-corner speeches advocating the recall of judges and what not. Girls were not what they used to be, and there was no way apparently of guaranteeing that they would not cause their guardians anxiety. He wished—at first—that he knew how Chloe was troubling Agatha.

Later, when he had been rebuffed in his efforts to discover the cause of his elect lady's perfectly patent anxiety, he began to pity himself a little. She had, he felt, no justification for snubbing him; she had claimed his whole life. Oh, of course, she hadn't demanded it, but she had accepted it—and she had given nothing in return. And it very ill became her to imply that he was treading upon forbidden ground when he asked if there were anything the matter with Chloe.

A sense of injustice is sometimes a very Jack the Giant Killer's beanstalk for growth, once started in a sensitive soul. Tom MacMurtha found it so. From the first smart of his wound, when Agatha had managed to imply, in her grandest Sylvester manner, that he was a mere outsider when it came to her and Chloe, to the fully developed grievance and the resolution to end the situation was but a step. Although, on this particular morning, his attention seemed to be wholly absorbed in the

consideration of the securities offered by various Wyncasseters for the loans that they wished the First National to make them, there was a perfectly audible undercurrent in his mind, singing over and over:

"I'm through, and she'll have to understand it."

It was upon that undercurrent of thought that his telephone rang. He answered mechanically. The girl at the bank's switchboard informed him that it was Miss Sylvester who wished to speak to him.

"All right. Let her go!" replied Tom MacMurtha, rather thinking that he might mention to Agatha over the telephone that he was "through." But he didn't. For when Agatha said, in her appealing voice, that she was in great trouble and would he come up when he left the bank, habit was stronger than the new resolution. He said that he would come—and he went. But in the meantime the very fact that she so cavalierly summoned and dismissed him at her need or her whim was additional fuel to his suddenly awakened sense of grievance.

She met him tragically and brought him to the veranda outside the conservatory. It led down into Agatha's garden, lovely with old-fashioned flowers. There was an arbor—Agatha would not have had a "pergola" for worlds!—at the end of a walk bordered with blue larkspur and early white lilies. Agatha suggested that they go there to sit, and Tom obediently followed.

They sat on the rather uncomfortable little iron seats provided for resting in the arbor, and Tom watched a vine winding about the base of a sundial, and a red rambler rose which had fallen grotesquely upon the ear of an iron greyhound that some bygone Sylvester had conceived an appropriate garden adornment.

"Chloe," she cried to him, "has left me."

"What!" he exclaimed, startled out of his absorption in his own troubles. "Do you mean she— What do you mean?"

"She has gone to her mother."

Major MacMurtha stared at her for a full minute. Her face had aged dreadfully in the past three weeks; the cheeks seemed to have lost their roundness and their bloom; the clear, bright, hazel eyes to have receded immeasurably beneath the fine, strong forehead.

"I didn't know," he said finally, "that Chloe had a moth—I mean I had no idea that she was still living, your brother's wife."

Agatha told him how the information had been brought to her. She told him how Chloe had withdrawn into herself for counsel. She told him how the girl had, after a week's consideration, gone to New York to see her mother, and how, coming back, she had said that she thought it her duty to stay with her.

"I cannot say that I do not admire her—Chloe, I mean," said Agatha, with some pride. "It is like Richard not to shrink from doing the hard thing—"

"The Sylvesters have always been rather keen on doing the hard thing—to themselves and sometimes to other people," observed the major.

"Why, what do you mean?" cried Agatha, sidetracked for the moment.

"Just that. It's hard on you—isn't it?—for Chloe to give up her home here, and to go to live with a woman whom you can't respect or trust, and of whom you are naturally jealous—"

"Jealous?" gasped Agatha indignantly.

"Jealous," repeated Tom MacMurtha, with finality. "And I dare say it was as hard upon Helen Jewell—what's her married name?—Lamont—when Richard broke with her, as it was for him to do it. Yes, not to spare themselves or others in doing their duty or living up to their ideals has always been a first principle with you Sylvesters."

"Tom, what is the matter with you to-day?" asked Agatha. There was a momentary color masking the sallow pallor of her cheeks.

"Oh, nothing!" he answered. "I'm only doing my thinking out loud, instead of in the decent privacy of my own mind. But go on about Chloe."

"Well, nothing—but she's gone. And I don't know if the woman is respectable—even outwardly so! I don't believe she is."

"Hard lines," commented the major, without too much sympathy. "But Chloe's of age, of course? Twenty-two or so, isn't she? You couldn't coerce her—lock her up on bread and water or anything of that kind. And I don't believe, somehow, that she will find herself contaminated by the experience, whatever it may be."

"Tom," quavered Agatha, "you don't know how I love her. You don't know how I love her! She's all I have in the world. She is the world to me—and the sun and the moon and the stars! She was the sweetest child, the dearest baby girl! And Heaven sent her to me when I needed comfort so! Oh, how am I going to live without her?"

"I suppose she'll come back by and by?" suggested the major. "The kind of mother I imagine Chloe's to be isn't likely to be too keen about having a grown daughter around, is she? Especially one like Chloe—with—er—such different standards. She'll come back."

"But—but she's engaged!" Agatha looked more whitely tense than ever. "Or—or she was! She met him on the steamer. And in twelve days—twelve days, Tom!—I was blotted out of the world for her. She forgot me, she forgot everything except that—But now it's broken. They've quarreled. He was opposed to her going to her mother. So—so she broke the engagement. She's a thorough Sylvester. She will have no compromise with what

she conceives to be the highest duty! But of course he'll never let her escape. He'll keep at her. He'll win her again. He's sure to. I shall never have my little girl again, Tom! She was all that life gave me, and now I have her no longer. She is doubly gone."

In spite of his grievance, the major was sorry for the desolation that spoke in that voice, looked out of those eyes. He laid his big hand upon her knee.

"Tough luck, Agatha!" he admitted. "But it's the universal experience of the parent. And you've been one, if ever there was one, to Chloe. But they come back by and by—the girls. I see it with my sisters. They follow their desires, they forget the old mother who bore them. And then—generally it isn't until they've borne a child themselves—they come back. Real companions, real friends at last—understanding, giving and sharing; not merely taking everything. You'll have Chloe again. You may not have to wait so long as a real mother—I mean a mother of the flesh—generally has to wait. Chloe will learn what you have been to her from seeing what the other woman is not. She won't have to wait for children of her own to teach her."

Agatha did not pause to wonder at the kindly wisdom of him. She only moaned again: "I'm so lonely!"

Tom's strong jaw worked a little as he watched her in her grief. In spite of the ravage that it had wrought in her, she still had the power to stir his pulses with longing. It was not all kind, protective love he felt for her, though that indeed he did feel; nor was it all reverence for his high, cloud-enthroned saint. There was the longing of the natural man in him also, and at this moment, perversely enough, it became his uppermost emotion.

"Don't do that, Agatha!" he cried. "Don't look at me like that! Don't speak like that! Why, aren't you perfectly aware that I'd give my life to

wipe the tears from your eyes—to kiss them from your eyes? Don't you know it? Agatha, marry me! Live among realities; live to-day. Live with me and let me teach you to be happy again."

Agatha shrank back, a little frightened at the storm she had evoked. She didn't know this Tom MacMurtha, with the dry, patient smile gone from his face, with the kind, steadfast eyes burning with new, fiery blackness. She chose to be a little indignant.

"Tom!" she cried. "How can you? How could you abuse my trust in you, my perfect reliance upon you?"

"Because, I suppose," Tom supplied the reason with the greatest promptness, "I'm a man and not, after all, a modern saint in a dark niche."

"Why, Tom!" This time her voice was plaintive and tinged with astonishment. "I—I never saw you like this before, violent and bitter! Never before have you forgotten what you brought me home from Cuba. Never before have you forgotten where my heart lies buried."

"A few minutes ago," Tom pointed out, quite brutally, "your heart was right here, in this garden, freshly broken by Chloe's desertion of you."

Anger sent the blood in a bright flood over Agatha's face and neck. No woman wants the inconsistencies of her tragedies pointed out.

"This—this is unpardonable!" she cried. "How dare you talk to me like this? Why, after, all these years, do you come to me as if you thought me like other women, free to listen to tales of love? You have known from the very first that all the romance of my life—"

"Was buried in Cuba," Tom helped her out grimly. "Yes."

She flashed an even angrier glance upon him, but controlled her voice to go on: "I have never deceived you. I have taken your friendship very gladly, very gratefully. But you have always

known that I had only friendship to offer you in return for all that you have done for me, all that you have meant to me. You were never deceived, never!" She was almost guiltily emphatic about it. Then she spoke more softly: "You have hurt me cruelly to-day, Tom."

Tom hauled his big frame up from the uncomfortable little iron seat.

"Sorry, Agatha," he said briefly. "Or no, I'm not, either. You must have known in your heart what it was in me that you were taking, trading on, using up. You must have known. You're a sentimentalist and a saint, Agatha, but you're not a fool. You knew that it was love—a man's love, dear—that kept me running your errands and holding your wool, so to speak, and drying your eyes figuratively. You've known it—but you didn't mind so long as the truth was never spoken! You've been a little bit of a pretender, haven't you? Confess!"

"I have not been!" she cried, with such energy as to acknowledge his charge.

He smiled down upon her, and shook his head slowly.

"Oh, yes, you have been, Agatha!" he corrected softly. "But never mind. You've rejected me, I take it?"

"I certainly have, if you call it that you've made me an offer! I—I am another man's. As inviolably as he is mine."

Tom MacMurtha winced in pain.

"All right," he said, after he had conquered the impulse to say something else. "So I'm rejected. Well, I'm rather glad we had it out—"

"But you know things can never be just the same with us again, Tom!" she informed him accusingly.

"Good God! You didn't suppose I wanted them the same, did you?"

"Do you mean," she asked, in a rather startled, low voice, "that—this—ends everything—between us?"

"Of course if I can ever be of any

practical use to you," he answered courteously, "I hope you will count upon me and let me know."

Her eyes were wide with amazement when he left her. Her faithful Old Dog Tray had actually found fault with the bone and the "good doggie" she had flung him from time to time! Men were, without any doubt, rank materialists, even the best of them, incapable of understanding pure idealism, pure romance, high, changeless love. It was somewhat of a comfort to think that she appreciated these things in their beauty. But Wyncasset looked a little lonely, and the garden paths where a child's figure had flitted among the flowers and a kindly man's steps had kept pace with her own seemed as desolate as if it had been November and not blossomy June.

CHAPTER V.

Chloe was making her way down the stone stairs of Carnegie Hall from the top balcony, where she had been listening, in the conscientious Wyncasset manner, to the performance of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, when, opposite the door of one of the boxes, she was seized in a friendly grasp.

"Chloe Sylvester!" cried a cheerful, dominant voice. "You are the very person I wanted to see!"

"Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Lamont?" said Chloe, with lackluster voice and eyes.

"Where are you going? Home? No, my child, you're not. You're coming straight out to tea with me. Girls"—Mrs. Lamont included in the appellation a bevy of females of assorted ages who had apparently been her companions in the box—"I'm off with Miss Sylvester for tea. I shan't stop to introduce you or anything. I've lost her for six months, and I have a great deal to say to her."

"But, Mrs. Lamont——" began Chloe protestingly.

"But me no buts. Mrs. Lamont will take no denial," declared the elder lady vivaciously, but very firmly. "Remember, Chloe, your father jilted me a quarter of a century ago, and the least his family can do now is to grant my every wish on the instant it is made known."

Chloe sighed and smiled as she yielded. She looked with a veiled inquisitiveness at the woman who so gayly proclaimed her jilting. Chloe compared her—handsome, healthy, keen, imperious—with the woman for whose sake she had been thrown over. She sighed again, and averted her eyes; she didn't want Mrs. Lamont's keen orbs to detect the flagrant, unfilial disloyalty in them. How could her father have been so deceived?

Over their teacups, in the crowded, rustling, gay Plaza tea room, Mrs. Lamont studied her young friend shrewdly through her chatter. The girl was older and paler and thinner than she had been six months ago, aboard the *König Adolphus*. She had made acquaintance with life since that sunny, happy voyage, and, so far, life had been worthing her.

"Now, tell me all about it, my dear," commanded Helen Lamont, when she had seen Chloe's plate furnished with toast and jam and Chloe's tea diluted with the exact amount of cream that she herself considered palatable.

"There isn't much to tell," said Chloe bravely. She looked with hungry eyes at the pretty, idle, expensive scene—eyes that proclaimed to an acute reader that she had not been seeing much of the ornamental side of existence lately. "I'm living in New York with my mother. And I'm teaching history in Miss Horton's school. And that's all—except that Aunt Agatha is angry with me." The childish phrase fell quaintly from her lips.

"Not quite! You've thrown over that splendid young man of yours, and you're not having a very good time," declared Mrs. Lamont.

Chloe dimpled slightly, and looked, for an evanescent second, like the Chloe of six months ago.

"It was he threw me over, Mrs. Lamont. You'll sympathize with me."

"You young minx! To twit an old woman like me! But what do you mean? I've seen him—I've seen him a good deal lately"—there was a measured meaning in her tones—"and he assured me that it was you who broke the engagement."

"I don't know to whom the technical honors of the situation fall," said Chloe, drooping wearily again. "He said he would not permit me to go and live with my mother. Of course, I told him I couldn't tolerate such an attitude of ownership. Not merely about my mother, you know, but about controlling my actions."

"I see," said Mrs. Lamont thoughtfully.

"You say"—Chloe's gaze was fixed in a gentle abstraction upon people at the other end of the room—"that you have seen him?"

"Yes. He came to see me in June, after your silly quarrel. He told me all about it. But he made me vow to attempt no interference; he wanted your heart and not my meddlesomeness to bring you penitently back to him. Then I saw no more of him for a while. We were at Georgian Bay until last month. But he's been to see me several times since we've come home. You see, I have a very attractive niece visiting me."

"Yes?" drawled Chloe. "May I have another cup? That was just right—delicious. He's quite well, I hope?"

"His health seems very good," said Mrs. Lamont. And then suddenly: "I am not going to try to tease you, dear child! It is true that Roger Hayes comes quite often to see me lately, and that my niece, Mabel Lamont, is a pretty girl. But I think the present bond between them—I emphasize

the present, you see—is that they both have romantic sorrows which they confide to each other. Mabel's stern parents have sent her to me to cure her of an infatuation for a man more than twice her age, a widower with children, at that! She's only eighteen. They say that if she does not change within two years, she may have her lugubrious choice! But, meantime — Well, my dear, when two young, sad, and misused young persons begin to tell each other their wrongs and griefs—anything is likely to come of it!"

"Thank you, Mrs. Lamont. I am sure you mean to be very kind," said Chloe, with a sweet chilliness. "But if your niece and Mr. Hayes fall in love with each other in the course of their confiding, will it not be an admirable solution of all their present problems?"

"Chloe dear, don't try to be an absurd little Spartan," said the older woman, with rough kindness. "Tell me—are you in love with him, or aren't you?"

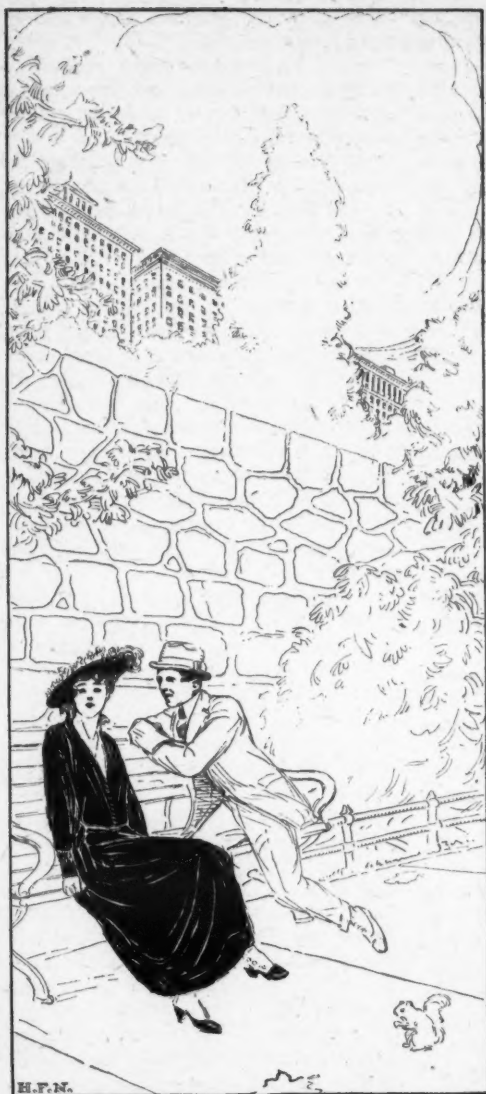
Chloe's lips twitched with pain, but she resolutely twisted them into a smile.

"Do you want me to say 'yes' after what you've just told me?" she asked. "I suppose I shouldn't have become engaged to him if I had not—had not—had not——"

And then the courageous effort failed. Chloe bent her graceful neck, and veiled the tears in her eyes with her long-lashed lids.

"You poor child! Don't think me a meddlesome, impossible old woman—though I am meddlesome! I always feel," she said whimsically, "that a little of my common sense, brought to bear upon any situation, would clear it up at once! And I'm fond of your father's daughter, Chloe. I never had one of my own, you see. Why don't you make it up with Roger?"

"It wasn't I who issued ultimatums, Mrs. Lamont," answered the girl, with



"I was altogether wrong," declared Chloe firmly.

spirit. "And I'm going to do my duty as I see it. My mother needs me more than any one else in the world——"

vated station, she wondered if she had been wise to permit herself even so slight a departure from the routine she

"Humph! Does she also want you more?" inquired Mrs. Lamont practically.

"That," answered Chloe, with a stern emphasis that was illuminating as to her mother's delight in her society, "has nothing whatever to do with my duty in the matter."

"Oh, you Sylvesters! Well, then, since you won't be reasonable and send for Roger, when will you come to dinner with me?"

"Not at present, thank you, dear Mrs. Lamont," answered Chloe, smiling. "I'd be afraid to trust your judgment about the other guests."

"You guessed my scheme! It was not Machiavellian, I admit. But I promise I won't ask him—I promise it. Now, when will you come?"

"Not just now, please, Mrs. Lamont. I—I think it's better for me not to attempt any social life at present." The girl's face had clouded again.

"At least you'll let me know where you are living? You see, I'm being very reasonable and humble for a self-willed woman!"

"Not even that, if you don't mind," pleaded Chloe. "There are so many reasons—and you have Miss Horton's school for an address, you know. And now I must be getting on. Thank you for the party. It's been great fun!"

It had been a little glimpse of her old, easy, pretty, pleasant sort of life. As she climbed the stairs to the elevated station, she wondered if she had been wise to permit herself even so slight a departure from the routine she

had marked out for herself. Surely the life to which she was now returning would, after this respite, look more squalid, more sordid than ever. She sighed. If only she dared disregard the voice of her conscience, which declared a daughter's first duty to be to a parent, no matter how objectionable and indifferent the parent might be, and if only she could persuade herself that dear Agatha needed her more than her—mother; it required the strongest effort even to think the word. And if only, somehow, without a loss of maiden pride and fine dignity, she might let Roger know—

But she snapped her white teeth together over a sharp negating of these unregenerate desires. Her duty was to her mother! If she fulfilled it, good must follow; or, if no good followed, at any rate she must fulfill it. Proudly she reminded herself that to do the right thing and to ask for no reward was the Sylvester way; to walk in the right path and not to inquire whither it led—that was to be a Sylvester!

With a myriad homeward-crowding toilers, she left the train at One Hundred and Sixteenth Street, and went down in the elevator at the station to the thronging, brightly lighted street. The flat in which she and Gwendolin Grayson and the mellifluous Mrs. Janvier lived together was on one of the side streets off Eighth Avenue—a set of sunless little cells, honeycombed among a thousand others exactly like them. Chloe always tried, as she turned into the street at night, to translate her intense, personal dislike for it, so narrow, so gloomy, with its long rows of cheap, ugly, undifferentiated façades, into a decent, human regret that life offered nothing better than this to so many men and women, to so many children. She must not resent it merely for herself, she said—she must resent it for all to whom it was absolute necessity, no

mere capricious imposition of a super-sensitive conscience.

She turned into the small, gaudy box of a hall, passed forty-eight letter boxes and annunciators set into the green-veined, sham-marble panel of the entry, and climbed up three flights of stairs. She went slowly; not that she was fatigued, but that she hated to open the door upon what she knew she should find. But at last she did it. She turned her key in the latch and entered the stuffy, narrow, private hall. Through an ornate red shade upon the hall light—a strange glass thing covered with knobs that always reminded Chloe of warts—she caught her accustomed glimpse of the hat tree, with a man's overcoat and velours hat hanging upon it. She frowned as she walked toward the box of a sitting room. A waft of cigarette smoke and the sound of laughter emerged from it. She frowned more severely, and entered.

A man scrambled from an easy-chair as she came in, and made her a low bow. Her mother, sprawled upon a lounge—which served as Mrs. Janvier's bed by night—waved an airy, heavily ringed hand toward her. Her Aunt Genevieve was mercifully absent; her Aunt Genevieve was the worst of all Chloe's present crosses.

"Hello, darling child!" cried Mrs. Grayson, with an extravagant affection that—as Chloe had come to know—boded only one thing. "You are late, aren't you? Is it cold out? Tired, petsy? Say, there's some cocktail left in the shaker, ain't there, Walt? Have one, Chloe. It'll do you good after your hard day's work. Well, then, mix another, Walt. You know your way to the sideboard by this time, don't you?"

The man, the somewhat shopworn remnant of a conventionally handsome, conventionally conquering piece of masculinity, stood with his hand upon the tarnished shaker, looking at Chloe inquiringly.

"Not for me, Mr. Catlin, thank you," she said, forcing a smile.

"Yes, petsy, you can take one—a little one. I wouldn't let you take it if I didn't think you needed it," insisted Mrs. Grayson, very gravely—the judicious mother. "You can trust your own mother not to let you do anything out of the way, can't you? I'd hate to have a child of mine grow into a lush, of course. But a little drink when you come in worn out and tired— Go mix another, Walt! Didn't you hear me?"

"But Miss Sylvester doesn't seem to think she wants one," said the owner of the green velours hat, smiling tenderly upon Chloe.

"Oh, she'll take it when it's mixed. Go and mix it. If she doesn't"—Mrs. Grayson laughed a trifle shrilly—"maybe I will."

"I'll make a very mild one, Miss Sylvester," said Catlin, in a low voice, as he passed Chloe.

"What's he whispering to you?" demanded Mrs. Grayson boisterously. "No secrets! And, say, Chloe, I can't have you cuttin' me out— Oh, by the way, that nigger girl left to-day."

"Mahala?" cried Chloe, dismayed, pausing in the doorway that led to her alcove bedroom, her hat in her hand.

"That's the only nigger girl we've got, ain't it?" said her mother belligerently. "She's left."

"But why?"

"Oh, help is always unreliable," answered Mrs. Grayson, largely and vaguely. "I wouldn't bother about it. You'll get some one better. They say Finns are fine. Mahala will come back to-morrow morning for her things and her wages. You're home Friday mornings."

"Yes; but didn't she do anything about dinner?"

"Not a thing. And neither did I. I've been out all the afternoon, trying to see managers. Not a part that I

would look at! However, that's all right—about Mahala, I mean. Walt is going to take us all out to dinner at the Dorée. It'll be a nice change. Your Aunt Vieva will be home soon. Ah, see the handsome barkeep!" she hailed the return of Mr. Catlin.

Chloe persisting in her refusal of the cocktail, the older lady and the gentleman saved it, as they said jocularly, from going to waste. And Aunt Vieva coming in, another was mixed for her.

"Walt won't have to buy us a cocktail at the Dorée," said Mrs. Grayson, hiccuping a little in her congratulatory remarks.

"I don't believe I'll come with you to-night, mother, if you don't mind," said Chloe, looking miserably at them all. "I've just had a vast tea at the Plaza——"

"At the Plaza?" sneered Aunt Genevieve.

"Yes. I happened to meet Mrs. Lamont—a friend of mine, a steamer acquaintance," said poor Chloe, sheering away from the always dangerous topic of the Sylvesters' friends. "So I'm not hungry, and there'll be cold meat in the ice chest for a sandwich, by and by."

"I wish you would come, Miss Sylvester," said Mr. Catlin, in wooing tones, his bold eyes fixed on her.

"Oh, after the Plaza, I dare say the Dorée doesn't seem good enough!" cried Aunt Genevieve vindictively.

"Nonsense!" cried Chloe. "Mr. Catlin understands that it's no such thing, I'm sure." Her eyes besought his kind construction of her refusal of the invitation.

"Of course, of course!" he answered soothingly. "But it would give me—all of us—so much more pleasure if you would come."

"Not to-night, thank you," insisted the girl. And they went off at last without her.

When they had gone, she opened the parlor windows to rid the room of the

odors of tobacco, French powders, and gin that always pervaded it at this hour. It all seemed more unbearable than ever, after the glimpse of the afternoon into that other world in which she had always hitherto belonged. She was a little ashamed of the strength of her objections to the disorder and the tawdriness in which she lived. One should be able to accept any sort of material discomfort with serenity; did not reality exist in the mind and the heart only?

"But," she defended herself against herself, "it's the spiritual ugliness that revolts me, not merely the actual *thing* ugliness and the inconvenience."

There had been a quarrel on the very day when she had fulfilled her promise to come and live with her suddenly devoted mother. The question of financing the new household had, as it happened, not arisen in the preliminary visit. Chloe had merely said that, of course, they must move from the hotel in which she had found her maternal relatives established. It was not only a dreadful, fourth-rate hostelry, but it had impressed even her unsophistication as being of questionable character. They would take an apartment somewhere, she promised, and the elder ladies had cooed and smiled and approved.

But when, on her arrival to enter upon the new life, they had discovered that she had some notions—they called them "hifalutin'"—in regard to not using the Sylvester money for the new venture, there had been a blaze of anger that had threatened—thereby causing a cowardly hope in her panicky breast—to end the whole undertaking.

Chloe had told her mother and her aunt that she had obtained a position in Miss Horton's school, to teach history. And her mother had smiled at her admiringly and had said:

"Hist'ry! Ain't she a wonder, Vieve? But your father was bookish, and the Graysons have always been real intellectual."

Chloe had winced at the mention of her father. How could her mother? How *could* she? But, controlling her disgust, she had gone on to state what her salary would be. The two elder women had looked at each other wonderingly, at her resentfully.

"But you've surely got your own income?" Aunt Vieve had cried promptly.

Chloe had blushed. She had swallowed hard upon a mounting spasm of shyness and disgust. She had finally brought herself to say the words in her mind.

"I do not think it would be—er—delicate for us to live on the Sylvester money," she had said, "considering—everything."

"And what do you mean by that insinuation, miss?" her mother had inquired, with extreme hauteur.

"I don't like to say it," Chloe had replied, "but surely you can understand, mother, without my dwelling upon it."

"If you mean that I haven't a right to be supported by Sylvester money——" The voice had been shrill and angry, the color in the painted hollows of the cheeks had grown something other than the static, artificial rose that bloomed there unceasingly. But except for these manifestations of anger and dissent, Mrs. Grayson had not been able to go on.

"I do think that, mother," Chloe had answered, in a low, shamed voice.

And Mrs. Janvier had burst into the discussion with vulgar invective, with accusations of meanness, of penuriousness, against the whole Sylvester family.

"I'm sorry," the girl had answered miserably. "But that's the way I feel about it. I know, mother, that my father settled a sum of money upon you when you—when he—when——"

"When we separated, when I was driven almost mad by his cold, self-righteous——" Mrs. Grayson had begun magnificently.

"When you separated," Chloe had in-

errupted, cutting short vituperation with unexpected decision. "And I do not think that the Sylvester family owes you anything, mother. I'm sorry to seem harsh. But that is the truth. And somehow I don't feel that I should take the Sylvester money for myself when I am doing something of which the head of the family disapproves. Don't you see?" she had finished pleadingly.

They had not seen, and they had been somewhat abusive in expounding their lack of perception in the matter. But violence had only stiffened Chloe in her resolution.

"I'm sorry to disappoint you," she had ended the discussion and had silenced the angry clamor by and by, "but my contribution to our living will be the hundred dollars a month I receive from Miss Horton. If you do not care to live with me on those terms, we'll give it all up. I know that I could draw upon the Sylvester estate for as much as I please, in reason, although there has never been a settlement of it since grandfather died, and the Wyncasset Trust handles it all. It wasn't necessary while my Aunt Agatha and I lived together and she managed——"

"She has probably robbed you of your rights," Aunt Vieva had interrupted, but Chloe had stopped her with a furious glance.

"And I will not draw upon it," she had ended. "If it were absolutely necessary, I do not say that I shouldn't. But it isn't absolutely necessary. I can earn enough to do a great deal toward our support. You, mother, say that you mean to go on with your stage work; so does Mrs.—Aunt Vieva. You must have a little income from the money my father settled upon you——"

"I changed the investments," Mrs. Grayson had confessed. "I was so badly advised—robbed, if you ask me! There's nothing left of that."

"Well, anyway, we can manage. And that is the only way in which I am

willing to go on with the affair. Oh, mother, I hope"—Chloe had been on the verge of tears—"that we are going to be good friends, and that——"

"Good friends!" Aunt Vieva had snorted, casting outraged eyes to the ceiling at the unofficial suggestion of any doubt in the matter. "Good friends!"

But the discussion had finally died away to a sullen peace, and Chloe had gone house hunting, to meet the first overwhelming surprise of her life when she encountered the New York rentals.

She thought of all this now, as she foraged in the ice chest for cold meat. How was she ever going to "stick it out"? She had had some sentimental dream of bringing her mother back to normal life as she herself had always known it—a life of simplicity and nobility, of charm derived from the union of these two elements. But she had early recognized the hopelessness of that dream. Gwendolin Grayson had her own ideal of life; it was to be forever young, forever beautiful, forever flattered, extravagant, excited. Time had disposed of the ideal ruthlessly. She was growing old; her haggard, painted, powdered, penciled face bore scarcely a reminiscence of the dark-eyed, seductive beauty that had lured the heart from the bosom of young Richard Sylvester so long ago, and had played havoc with all his carefully formed tastes and judgments. She was pinched by poverty and could indulge in only the most tawdry extravagances. The excitements and rivalries of her undistinguished stage career were growing more and more intermittent as longer and longer periods elapsed between shabby engagements. The flatterers had all vanished down the aisles of time, except for a few indolent hangers-on of the Catlin type, shabby, shady men whose dwindling powers of captivation made them, if not grateful for, at least tolerant of such satisfactions as intercourse with the two women afforded

them. And for all that she had lost of the joy of life, Gwendolin Grayson had now left but two things—the venomous, stinging pleasure of malicious gossip about her friends and associates, and the languorous illusions resident in the actively used cocktail shaker.

Chloe's ideals and her mother's were in the direst conflict, and the girl felt, though so to feel shook her belief in the very fundamentals of the universe, that hers were foredoomed to failure in the contest she had set herself to wage. She did not admit her expectancy of failure to herself; she would not. Was it not the rock of her faith that good must always triumph, noble effort always gain a goal? But deep within her heart she believed her mother irreclaimable to a serene and dignified way of life.

The doorbell rang upon her meditations. She made her way to the deserted kitchen to press the button of admittance. The caller was the dark Mahala, defiant, apologetic, impudent, cringing. She had come for her wages and her trunk. A boy waited in the entry below, prepared to cart the latter to her present abode in his wheelbarrow.

Chloe counted out the money due and intimated that the boy might come up for the luggage.

"I ain't got nothin' against yuh-all, Miss Chloe," whined Mahala. "'Tain't yuh-all. Yuh treated me like a lady, but——"

"That will do, Mahala," said Chloe calmly.

"Well, yuh kin shet me up, if that's the way yuh're a-mind to take it," spluttered the offended Abigail. "But I doan' mean nothin' but kindness to yuh when I tells yuh that if yuh knew the goin's-on in this heah flat as soon as yuah back's turned in the mawnin', yuh'd know I was a frien' to yuh when I tole——"

"That will do, Mahala," said Chloe again, this time more incisively.

"Gin cocktails as soon as they're awake! Ole cocks like that theah Catlin heah for breakfuss five mawnin's a week——"

"I don't want to hear any more, Mahala. You had better call your boy upstairs and take your trunk at once."

"An' I wasn't hired to take sass from that aunt of yours—an' I won't take it! Callin' herself a lady! I knows what to call the likes of her!"

Chloe walked to the annunciator and whistled down for the janitor.

"There's a colored boy in the basement hall," she said. "Please send him up to Miss Sylvester's flat, and come up yourself to help him down with a trunk. Good night, Mahala. You may wait in the hall outside."

Mahala tried to mumble something further, but Chloe, suddenly more angry than she had ever been before in her life, laid her strong, slim hands upon the young negress' shoulders and pushed her out into the hall, closing the door after her.

"There!" she cried to herself, with sharp pleasure in the feeling that she had applied physical force, and had ended a situation by mere brute power. "There!"

In another minute she shuddered away from the revelation of herself that the unexpected action had given her. What was happening to her, to Chloe Sylvester, that she had actually enjoyed pushing an impertinent negro servant out of her house? What could have happened to her that she could find in herself a wild, upsurging desire to end all her problems in the same way—to catch her mother with strong, cruel hands and shake her into a terrified obedience, to force her aunt forever out of her presence by the application of physical strength?

The janitor and the boy came up, and she opened the door to admit them.

Mahala, cowed by sheer surprise, stood against the stair rail, looking with dazed eyes toward the door through which she had been ejected with such unexpected roughness. Chloe gave her instructions as to the trunk, and again closed the door. She felt a somewhat dizzy wish to get within her own room and there to make acquaintance with this new, hitherto unguessed self. But before the departing Mahala was half-way down the stairs, the doorbell had rung again, and again she was pressing the button in the kitchen. This time it was her mother's friend, Mr. Catlin.

"The girls," he said, airily referring to his contemporaries, "asked me to come in and tell you that they won't be in until very late. We met Maudie Hilton and Gifford at the Dorée, and Gwen and Vieve have been persuaded to go over to their diggings for some baccarat and a supper afterward. You're not to sit up, your mother says."

"Thank you for bringing the message," said Chloe stonily.

She had not asked Mr. Catlin to sit down, but he had not awaited her invitation. He was sitting in the easy-chair that seemed to her jaundiced recollection to have been occupied by him almost ever since it had been installed in the flat. He took a cigarette from his case, and held it up to her inquiringly.

"You don't mind if I smoke?" he asked.

Chloe did mind, very much. That is, she minded his presence intensely; she hated his air of at-homeness, of intimacy. But she could not, in spite of the rude, new desire she felt to end all distasteful situations by brutally direct means, bring herself at once to order her mother's friend from the apartment. So she replied, monosyllabically and with obvious untruth, that she did not mind.

Mr. Catlin watched her out of eyes that had once been compellingly handsome and that still held some native

masculine force, despite the lines that time had drawn around them and the pouches that dissipation had made beneath them.

"Poor little girl!" he said at last. His voice was caressing.

Chloe, who had been lost temporarily in a half-sullen fit of musing on the question of how soon and how unobjectionably she might dismiss him, stiffened and brought her eyes back from vacancy to look at him with haughty inquiry. One of the things that she did not conceive as part of her duty to her mother's friends was the acceptance of any intimate relations with them.

"I beg your pardon?" she said coldly. "I'm afraid I wasn't attending. I'm rather tired to-night."

"I called you a poor little girl," said Catlin, lighting a new cigarette and settling himself more comfortably in his chair. "And you are, you know. A poor, brave, dear girl—a child battling with giants."

He had never yet happened to meet a woman who did not like to listen to talk about herself, to hear her valor appreciated and the odds against which she exerted it magnified; and Chloe was a woman. Why shouldn't she like it? A pretty woman, too; he would enjoy a confidential intimacy with her!

"I don't believe I care to discuss my situation with you," the astonishing young person broke in upon his smiling forecast of their future friendship. Chloe herself felt almost the same satisfaction in the sound of this unpromising statement as she had felt in the unmistakable act of shoving Mahala out of the apartment. Certainly there was a great deal to be said in favor of the rule of force!

Catlin sat farther back in his chair. If he was astonished by her brusquerie, he gave no sign.

"That," he told her soothingly, "is part of your fineness and bravery. You're carrying a big burden—oh, my



"But it's my house! It's my house! My apartment is on the third floor——"

dear girl, don't think that I don't see the situation!—but your pride forbids you to demand sympathy, or even a little friendly aid." He leaned toward

her. "Chloe, child, I only want to help you. I can help you—more, I believe, than any one else. I have influence over your mother. I know things, too. Of course, I'm aware that you have a low opinion of me—you think I'm nothing but a second-rate actor chronically out of a job! But I want to help you, girlie."

"You're exaggerating the situation, Mr. Catlin," said Chloe, very coldly. "And you're using my name in a way that is offensive to me. And, as I am very tired——" She arose.

"You're ordering me out of the house?" His suave tone had changed. "The hospitable Miss Sylvester! After all, I believe that your aunt and your mother are also part householders here. They won't care to hear that their friends have not been made welcome. It's not one of the faults of the set that you despise so openly, Miss Sylvester, to be cold-hearted, self-righteous, mean. We share with a friend—or even with an enemy—anything that we happen to possess. Your mother may drink more than is good for her, but she wouldn't be guilty of ordering a friend from her house."

"I beg your pardon if I have seemed rude," said Chloe icily. "But, as I have tried to tell you, I am very tired and I wish to go to bed."

"And yet I could tell you something, if you had not taken this haughty-Lady-Imogene air with me, that would be money in your pocket and peace in your mind. I shan't now, however! Keep on playing the high-minded fool!"

"I'm not interested in anything you may have to say," announced Chloe stonily.

And, with a sneer and a theatrical bow, he made his way to the little hall, placed the green velours hat jauntily upon his thinning locks, and made his way out of the apartment.

"Certainly," said Miss Sylvester to herself, as she heard the door close after

him, "I have suffered some sort of sea change in my manners to-day."

It was an unfortunate expression to use, even in her mind. A sea change! She heard again the foghorns sounding, she felt again the chill of terror through her body, she sought warmth and comfort and sustenance from fear in a certain presence suddenly grown dear. And all the brutal angers and harshnesses of the day melted in a flood of tears as she recalled that night when she had found, as she had thought, her own heart. Roger had been right—her mother was not a fit companion for her—she was not a fit companion for her mother! There was no fit companionship without love and understanding. She didn't love her mother—she couldn't, she couldn't! And she didn't even want to understand her. So, of course, she would never be able to do for her what she needed. Roger had been right.

But what, she asked herself, was the use of admitting Roger's rightness now? After all, the unfitness that she recognized in the companionship was not the one that he recognized. And even if she were to yield to his wishes and abandon her mother, what would be the use? He was philandering now with a fool of a girl who thought herself in love with some elderly fascinator; he, Roger, was unstable, inconstant! She hadn't found it necessary to anoint the wounds of her heart by a sentimental friendship with any young man—even had any young man happened to come her way. None had, of course. The only possible social life in the apartment was that of her mother and her aunt. She would die rather than let a friend see what manner of house hers was. But still——

"Why," cried Chloe, sitting up in bed suddenly in response to a great illumination that filled her mind, "that is what has made me so disagreeable to every one to-night—what Mrs. Lamont told

me about Roger! I'm jealous! Jealous of that lugubrious fool of a girl who thinks—— Jealous! Well, Chloe Sylvester, this is a pretty record! Jealous, rude, violent! You, who were going to set the world right!"

She was ashamed, remorseful. Defeated by the lowest of passions, she, the champion of nobility! Altogether it was a humbled warrior in the cause of duty who finally fell asleep that night. It was a fitful sleep, too, when at last it came. She was unconsciously listening for the return of the revelers—she always dreaded those returns from Maudie Hilton's and their other intimates'. But she was not awakened by their home-coming.

In the morning, rising heavy-eyed and unrefreshed, she found that her mother's bed and the sitting-room divan had both been untenanted all night. She looked at them with an anxious little shake of the head. She supposed that her mother had been too overcome by the hospitalities of the lavish Miss Hilton to come home; and that that lady had made up bunks for such of her guests as had found themselves unable or unwilling to seek their own quarters. She sighed. It had happened before. Life was hideous, disorderly——

But she herself must not be worsted by it. She had undertaken a certain high duty; let her go forward with it steadfastly, finely! Let her never again be so overcome by the ugly circumstances of her existence as to make them uglier by her attitude toward them, as to give them the victory over her by meeting them upon their own low terms. Her anger of yesterday, her mild brutalities, the jealousy which, she admitted, had been the mainspring of her actions, showed themselves to her remorseful eyes as the signs that she had been defeated in the battle of the ideal which she had set out to wage. She picked her banner up out of the dirt, as it were, and dedicated herself afresh

to the fight. To live, serene and undismayed, in the midst of spiritual as of material disorder, to make the influence of that serenity felt silently, inevitably, as the influence of the sun is felt in dingy places—that was her task!

By way of helping in its accomplishment, she spent the morning busily cleaning house. No young woman brought up by Agatha Sylvester could fail to be a notable house cleaner; the late Mahala had, it was soon disclosed, been a most superficial one. Chloe swept out dark corners and "under things." She mopped and polished and aired. She had no history classes at Miss Horton's on Friday mornings, and the whole forenoon sped busily and briskly in cleaning. When her mother and Aunt Vivia returned, they should find a home fairly resplendent in its cleanliness, subtly coercive toward orderly living by the fresh charm of it.

They had not returned when at last it was time for her to go downtown to a teachers' meeting. She wanted to visit an employment agency, too; both her mother and her Aunt Vivia were unalterably opposed to doing housework themselves. Neither of them was employed except in the time-consuming search for engagements, but each had an infinitesimal income, derived, as Chloe learned with shame, from investments in alimony-bearing husbands; and, even though it was sometimes necessary for them to threaten suits to obtain the trifling sums, they both found that the possession of "money of their own" was a staff of independence in their relations with Chloe, the breadwinner. And the very rock of their liberties was a determination not to "spoil their hands by housework."

She visited the employment agency first, and had the usual dreary set of interviews. She selected, or was selected by, the least objectionable of the candidates for housework, and departed, worried by the usual haunting

fear that the girl would not come, after all. And by and by, walking briskly, with the springing step of the old, glad, athletic Chloe, she came upon Riverside Drive. Down it she swung toward Miss Horton's admirable institution near its southern end.

The water sparkled in the bright autumn sunlight; the air was crystalline in its brilliancy. Color began to flow in Chloe's cheeks, lights to shine in her eyes. It is impossible for well-nourished twenty-two to believe long in the permanency of the unpleasant. Chloe could not see the way out of her difficulties, but the youth in her asserted itself to declare that of course, of course there was a way out and that it was soon to be manifested to her.

"The mere result of a little fresh air and exercise!" she told her hopeful heart, trying to propitiate the gods by pretending to prepare for the worst.

"Ah," countered the hopeful heart, "but how fundamentally good and kind must a universe be where just a little air and exercise can make the spirits soar like this! How beneficent! Things are bound to be all right in such a world if one has but a little courage and a little patience!"

And then, as she approached the dignified steps that led up the succession of terraces toward Miss Horton's group of buildings, she stopped suddenly. For there stood Roger Hayes, as fixed and determined a figure as if he had been an exceedingly latter-day bit of realistic sculpture, rooted in a concrete foundation. He saw her and abandoned the rigidity of his position. He came forward a few steps to meet her.

"This is a pretty time of day for you to show up to teach your pupils!" he began airily. "I've been waiting since half past eight. The policemen of the neighborhood— Oh, Chloe! Chloe!" The pretense of humor, of annoyance, of matter-of-factness, broke down. His eyes held hers with entreaty, with long-

ing. "Oh, Chloe, Chloe! My girl!" he cried, his voice suddenly rough with feeling.

"Roger!" faltered Chloe. "Roger!" Then, with some heat of indignation in her voice: "She told you—Mrs. Lamont told you!"

"Bless her soul, she did! She even telephoned it to Newark. And I— Well, I haven't left this block since half past eight this morning. Not even for lunch. And it's nearly three. Come, Chloe; come down the embankment. I feel as if all the young eyes in that school building up there were boring through my back and reading my heart. I don't like it. Come down there where they can't see me, and let me tell you how I love you!"

"We have a teachers' meeting every Friday after school," said Chloe. "I'm on my way to that. I haven't any classes on Fridays."

"You're not on your way to that! Chloe, come!"

She looked at him, and her heart sang with happiness. He was so fresh, so clean, so compelling, so dear, so unlike the defeated men of her recent acquaintance. He had never lowered his colors to dishonor, to insincerity, to base appetite! She turned her back upon the teachers' meeting and went down the embankment with him. A nurse crocheted endless yards of lace on a seat opposite the one they chose; she called occasional instructions to a roller-skating charge gliding back and forth along the unfrequented path; some squirrels chattered in the fragrant, fallen leaves. Otherwise it was very still.

Both of them had anticipated this hour a hundred times. They had rehearsed their speeches to each other; they had magnificently justified their courses of action; and each had, in those rehearsals, finally convinced the other by sheer force of kindly, patient exposition. And now that they were actually sitting side by side again, with

the blue arch of the sky tender above them and the great river beneath them sweeping out to the great sea, and the squirrels and the child playing undisturbed near them, all their fine speeches were forgotten. There were no words in the language wherewith they could tell each other all that was in their hearts. Their eyes met, and Chloe's were full of happy tears, and Roger's were darkened by the depth of his love and pity. Their hands met. What was it they had quarreled over?

"What fools we've been, Chloe! What a fool I've been, I mean! You were right, my darling——"

"I was altogether wrong," declared Chloe firmly.

"You were not. Your first duty was to your mother. Dearest, we shall fulfill that duty together—she shall live with us——" Chloe winced. "Yes, she shall. And if she will not let me be a son to her, at any rate I shall stand beside you in your task. I talked like a fool and a brute when I talked to you about commands from me to you."

Which was not in the very least what Mr. Roger Hayés had rehearsed to himself in those numberless imagined dialogues in which he had convinced Chloe by sheer force of unimpassioned reason that he had been quite right in all his demands.

"Dearest, it was I who was headstrong and mistaken," Chloe was astonished to hear herself insisting fervently. "They—my mother and my aunt—well, they really don't want me with them except for the financial reasons. They don't like me. I—I don't like Aunt Vieva. Roger, she's awful!" Chloe could not let her own ears hear her declare that she did not like her mother—that was too impious a thing to be said! But all that she repressed on this score she could put into her denunciation of Aunt Vieva. "She's a grasping, vulgar, affected—— Oh, she's a terrible person! I think she twists poor

mother around her finger. I'm sure this scheme for appealing to me was altogether hers. I—I'm not at all sure that she's good. And my mother—— Oh, Roger, you may be afraid of me when I tell you this. My poor mother drinks!"

"Good heavens! You poor, poor child! You poor, brave little thing!" It was singular how differently the recognition of her bravery fell upon Chloe's ears now from the way it had sounded last night.

"So you see——" She ended with an upward look at him.

"I see that you are an angel and that I'm a beast. But you remember, darling, before we were really engaged, before the blessed night of the fog, you had said a lot of advanced things about what you wanted—careers and sport and your own way generally—and all that was in my blundering mind when I took such a high stand about your living with your mother."

"I know. I see. I talked a lot of nonsense," said Chloe comfortably. "Those poor souls—my aunt and my mother—have had all the independence and career and sport that they wanted. And see them! Not, of course, that all careers would have to be like theirs. But even Miss Horton's—she's sixty and she's a fine woman, Roger, and such a useful one! But I feel sorry for her. Not that she would thank me for my sympathy. She'd think it sadly misplaced. But—— Oh, I'm through. Though, of course, if you hadn't come and found me——"

"But I did come and find you. I came and found you the very instant I had a clew. I tremble to think that I once considered Mrs. Lamont a tiresome person, and was of two minds whether or not to go to her house. She's the best, the kindest——"

"And she has such a pretty, sympathetic niece!" interpolated Chloe. But

there was laughter in the soft eyes she turned toward him, not rebuke.

"So she told you that? She has a pinch of malicious mischief in her make-up, that good woman! The girl—a namby——"

"Roger! I shan't love you half so well if you begin to run her down—the girl to whom you've been confiding your woes."

"Confiding nothing!" cried the valiant Roger. "I've been listening to her troubles. She's had rather a hard time of it, poor kid, though there's something morbid, to my mind, in the idea of a girl of eighteen being in love with a man twice her age, and a melancholy widower at that." Thus paying Miss Lamont for her sympathy, he dismissed her comfortably from his mind. "But let's not waste time in talking about any one but ourselves. I want to go home with you, and to meet your mother and to tell her that we are going to be married at once."

Chloe blushed and paled in quick succession. She swallowed hard upon her shame and her false pride.

"Come on!" she said, rising quickly lest the conventional coward in her should seek to make excuse for delay. "It's awful, Roger—I'm ashamed to have you see them. And I'm ashamed of myself for being ashamed. But we'll go at once. And get it over."

"You ought to see some of my people," said Roger soothingly. "They ought to be in jail——"

"But one's mother is different. However"—she held her head haughtily erect—"we'll do it at once."

They rode up the Drive on the top of one of the busses, in the fresh sunshine and wind. Again and again their eyes sought each other with that perennial question of reconciled lovers: "What did we quarrel over? What does anything matter but our love for each other?" And, like all reconciled lovers in the first flush of their renewed hap-

piness, they believed that they had learned the lesson for all time, and that never again would any difference of opinion divide their hearts.

As they approached her dwelling, Chloe's nervous color flamed higher, and her eyes no longer met Roger's. She drew in her breath in little, sharp gasps. It was going to be an ordeal, no matter how she strove to face it! And to think that it might have been Agatha, beautiful, fine, dignified, to whom she was presenting her lover!

In front of the apartment house were grouped a fire engine, a hook-and-ladder wagon, all the small boys of the neighborhood, and many of the adults. Streams of water filled the gutter. Great boa constrictors of hose lay upon the pavement. Helmeted firemen ran busily in and out of the house. A policeman guarded the roped-off approach. Chloe broke from Roger and ran forward.

"Can't pass, miss!" said the policeman firmly.

"But it's my house! It's my house! My apartment is on the third floor——"

"Name of Sylvester? I guess you can go through, all right, then, miss. It's your place where it started. It's all over—don't get excited. Not much harm done."

But he was addressing the indifferent air. Chloe and Roger were dashing into the marbled hall and running up the stairs before he had finished granting his permission and uttering his reassurances.

The firemen were in possession of Miss Sylvester's apartment. Curtains, chairs, sofas, pillows were all drenched. There was the acrid smell of charred fabrics on the air. Seated at the sitting-room table, looking very white except for the dabs of paint upon her hollowed cheeks, was Mrs. Grayson. Aunt Vieve ran importantly about. Through the hall came the jaunty Mr. Catlin,

bearing an alcoholic restorative to Mrs. Grayson.

"Here you are! Take that, girlie, and you'll be all right." Then he observed the newcomers. "Oh, beg pardon, Miss Sylvester. I didn't see that you had come in. Your mother's all unstrung—a bad shock. But it's all over now." He turned again to the woman in the chair.

"How did it happen? Mother—Aunt Vieva? What— Is it all out? Mother, this is my friend, Mr. Hayes; we were on the *König Adolphus* together. Aunt Vieva, Mr. Hayes—my aunt, Mrs. Janvier. Mr. Catlin—" Chloe performed her introductions wildly. "Please tell me about it—"

"Guess everything's all right now, miss," announced a fireman, appearing from the hall. "Not much damage by the fire, but afraid we've made you a good deal of a mess." He indicated the desk in a corner between the divan and the window; its water-soaked contents were thrown in heaps upon the floor.

There was a babble of conversation. Aunt Vieva, swelling with importance, was giving Roger a version of the cause of the conflagration.

"My poor sister, Chloe's mother, has been suffering all day from a frightful headache. She's the victim of her temperament. She feels things so! And she pays for feeling in shattered nerves. We—er—had been detained away from home last night. When we came in, an hour ago, Gwendolin lay down for a while, but she could not rid herself of her headache. Coffee sometimes helps her. She brought the coffee machine in here and set it going on the corner of the desk, there. The window was open—the curtain blew in—the alcohol flame flared—the curtain caught. Gwen, who had lain down to await the boiling of the coffee, and who had dropped off, didn't notice anything at first. Mr. Catlin and I were in the dining room for-

aging for a little luncheon. I thought I detected an odor—I have very acute senses. I ran in. The desk was burning; the curtains were gone. Gwen, my darling sister, Chloe's dear mother, was unconscious on the couch. I gave a scream—Mr. Catlin came running! I was on the verge of fainting—"

"Fortunately, Mr. Hayes," Catlin interrupted, "the people across the street had seen the flaming curtain from their windows. They had called up the fire department, and almost as soon as Mrs. Janvier and I were aware of the situation, the firemen were swarming all over the place."

"We," said Mrs. Janvier, very distinctly, "have no telephone. Chloe felt that she could not afford one. I said to her, at the time we discussed it: 'Chloe, my dear,' I said, 'a telephone is not a luxury; it is a necessity.' But she did not see it. She will know it now." Aunt Vieva severely nodded her head several times.

"Mother," said Chloe, bending over the silent figure at the table, "mother dear, are you terribly shaken? Are you frightened still? What a dreadful time for you!"

She took her mother's cold, limp hands in hers and caressed them. She felt a deeper pity and tenderness for the poor wreck, sitting huddled and confused in the chair, than she had ever felt before.

Of course, she could read between the lines of Aunt Vieva's explanation readily enough. Her mother had drunk too much at Maudie Hilton's revel the night before. She had come home still dazed and wretched from the effects of the debauch. She had begun to make the coffee, the strong restorative of her fuddled faculties, as Mrs. Janvier had related. And the accident had happened as that lady had described. But instead of anger and her customary disgust for the poor woman, she felt a warmer kindness than she had ever felt before.



"I hate to be mauled. I don't like it, and I won't stand it."

It was such a wreck of beauty, of strength, of purpose, that sat there, stupid and afraid, at the table! It was such a poor, defeated thing!

Mrs. Grayson pushed Chloe's hands away pettishly.

"Don't do that. I hate to be mauled," she said crossly.

Chloe drew back, flushing a little at the rebuff.

"She's still so shaken," said Vieva in excuse to the indignant-looking Roger.

"I hate to be mauled," declared Mrs. Grayson, with sudden loud intensity.

"I don't like it, and I won't stand it."

"Never mind, mother. I won't do it again," said Chloe.

Aunt Vieva and Catlin were interchanging looks and hurried whispers.

"And don't call me 'mother.' I'm tired of it," commanded the woman, with the same monotonous fierceness. "I am——"

"Gwennie, darling, you're all upset.

You must go to your room and lie down. We'll clear things up here," interrupted Mrs. Janvier desperately.

Her sister leered slyly at her.

"No, I ain't going to my room to lie down, either," she declared. "I know why you want me to. You're afraid I'll tell Chloe——"

"Gwen!" Both Catlin and Aunt Vieva spoke. The man laid a repressive hand on Mrs. Grayson's arm. She shook it off.

"——that I'm not her mother," she went on. "Well, why shouldn't I tell her? What good has it done me, pretending to be?"

"She's quite unstrung," said Catlin aside to Roger. "Of course, the shock—— And she had been drinking heavily——"

"I think, Chloe," said Roger decidedly, "that you had better ask these persons to let your—to let that lady alone. It would seem——"

"Vieva always knows so much more than any one else," the maudlin voice went on complainingly. "Chloe was going to give us money. But she didn't. Then Chloe was going to fix us in a nice place and support us, and by and by we'd get the money out of her, and get away. But Chloe was too damned mean to give up any money. I'm tired of Chloe. I don't like Chloe. She paints. That color of hers ain't natural. I don't like her. I don't believe even my sister Gwendolin would have liked her, if she had lived. Though Gwendolin was a sort of soft-hearted fool in some ways. I always got along with her better than I did with Vieva. Vieva's so bossy."

"Do you mean," cried Chloe, a great light on her face, kneeling upon the floor beside the woman's chair, "that you are not my mother? That my mother is dead?"

"Of course, you won't pay any attention to her. She's out of her mind," said Catlin.

Roger silenced him with a look.

"That's what I mean," asseverated the intoxicated woman with satisfaction. "She was my twin sister, Gwennie was. I'm Gladys. I hated being called out of my name all the time by Vieva and Walt and everybody that knew me." She whimpered a little. "And what was the good? You wouldn't make me any allowance. They said you would surely come to it, but I got tired. No, I'm Gladys. I'm not Gwennie. Poor Gwennie, she died a long, long time ago. Poor Gwennie! I liked her better than Vieva. Vieva was always so bossy. Gwennie died—— she died a long time ago."

Mrs. Grayson stretched her arms upon the table, laid her head on them, and fell asleep.

Chloe did not hear what they were saying all about her. She did not hear her Aunt Vieva's protests that "Gwen's mind was unstrung by drink and excitement"; she did not hear Catlin's assurances to Roger that he hadn't the least belief in the ravings of the poor, drunken creature, but that if they were, by any miracle, true, he had been entirely ignorant of the deception, had been himself duped. She only heard her own heart giving thanks that, after all, her own mother had not been so utterly degraded by existence as this poor, slumberous wreck upon the table.

"Chloe," said Roger, taking swift charge of the situation, "you had better get rid of these people at once. I will telephone to Wyncasset for your Aunt Agatha to come down as soon as she can. Meantime, lock up the apartment and go to Mrs. Lamont for the night. Of course, you must make——we must make——some provision for your—aunts. A sanitarium for——Mrs. Grayson, I should suggest. I'll call up Miss Wyeth's Nursing Home for Nervous Cases—that's polite for alcoholic cases in ten out of fifteen instances. And——"

"Oh, Roger, please do!" cried Chloe. "I couldn't bear to leave her like this, without making an effort to help her—an intelligent effort, I mean. And—Aunt Vieva—she spoke the name with less constraint than she had ever spoken it before—"I will make you and—Aunt Gladys—an allowance. I—I don't know if you will understand, but I feel now that I can do that. It was only my mother that I felt to be debarred from any more of the Sylvester money—you understand?" She appealed to Roger.

"Of course, darling," said Roger promptly.

"But I won't go to Mrs. Lamont's to-night. I'll stay here. I want to—pack, and make ready to leave for good. You go and do your telephoning, Roger. Mr. Catlin," she added, "will go out with you. Aunt Vieva and I will get moth—Aunt Gladys—ready for the nurse from Miss Wyeth's. And if you will come back at seven, I'll go out to dinner with you."

When the men had gone, there was a brief colloquy between the two women—Chloe and Genevieve Janvier. Mrs. Janvier attempted, for a few minutes, to laugh at her sister's story, but when she perceived that Chloe took no stock in her assertions, she suddenly, and with a sort of desperate effrontery, admitted the whole scheme.

"It's all right! It's all right!" cried Chloe. "Don't tell me why you did it. I can see, even if I think it was a dastardly thing to do. You were poor; you were lawless— Oh, I'm sorry for you, and I'll do things for you now that the truth is clear between us."

"You're a funny girl!" said Mrs. Janvier. "An awful funny girl!"

"No, I don't think I am. I think I felt the falsehood of our relation. There isn't much in the world to be resented by human beings toward one another," continued wise Chloe, "ex-

cept falsehood. Truth is the only thing we have a right to, one from another."

"Humph!" said Aunt Vieva dissentingly. But her hard face was bright with hope. Who could have foreseen that this strange girl would have been willing to do for her disreputable aunts what she would not do for a mother?

"I'm going to Maudie Hilton's for the night," she announced. "It will be a grand good thing if that Miss Wyeth's treatment can help Gw—Gladys. She'd be a good actress if she could only let the booze alone. When you're packing, if you come across things of mine in the desk, just put them to one side for me, will you?"

By and by they were all gone. Mrs. Grayson had departed with a nurse in a taxi. Mrs. Janvier had set forth on foot, but with a crisp note in her pocket-book and joy in her heart. Chloe made herself as fine as her wardrobe permitted for the dinner with Roger.

"Your Aunt Agatha will be here to-night," he informed her when he came back from his manifold errands. "I long-distanced her. We're to meet her after dinner. Her train gets in at eight-forty-seven. What a lovely voice she has, Chloe!"

"Yes," answered Chloe softly, her heart full of gratitude to the dear and fine soul who had given her a home and standards and ideals. Suppose her lot had been cast with those other women from babyhood!

The dinner with Roger—what a pleasure, as well as a happiness, that was! How the long-fasting sybarite in her reveled in the luxurious surroundings, in the softly shaded candles, in flowers and music and fine flavors again, even as her heart opened itself unreservedly to joy. And by and by she was to see dear Agatha again. Dear, kind, hurt Agatha!

"Roger, if only Aunt Agatha could find herself in love with good old Tom MacMurtha, and could marry him, I'd

not have a wish left unfulfilled in the world."

"She will," said the comfortable Roger. "When she sees how happy we are, she'll simply have to go and get a husband of her own. I'm inclined to think, Chloe, that we are going to be the greatest incentive to matrimony the world has ever known. We're going to be so contagiously happy that every one who sees us will go out and marry on the spot."

"Not poor darling Agatha, I'm afraid," sighed Chloe, smiling at the vision of a whole world bent on marriage.

They all went back to the little apartment together—the lovers and the tall, graceful, pretty woman whom they had met at the train. Roger was openly captivated by Aunt Agatha. Agatha had eyes only for her Chloe, in whom she apparently looked for some great change.

Roger went away early. The two women wanted to pack and to make ready to leave forever the dingy place of Chloe's initiation into the sordidness of life. They attacked the contents of the water-soaked desk first.

"Why, Chloe! Why, Chloe!" cried Agatha, as a pasteboard box which had been tied together with a string dissolved pulpily in her lap and a bunch of photographs slipped out.

"What is it?" asked Chloe, who was filing some receipts she had rescued in a blotted and blurred condition from a pigeonhole.

"I didn't know you had one of these. Why, where did you get it? How could you get it?"

Her tone was tense with accusation. Chloe lifted her eyes and faced a photograph which Agatha was holding toward her—the photograph of a young man in uniform, with straps upon his shoulders. She gazed at it blankly for a second, then looked at Agatha.

"But I don't know what you mean,"

she said. "It's—Mr. Lestrangle's picture—the one you have on your desk in your room—isn't it?"

"The same picture, but not mine. Where did you get it?"

"I didn't," replied Chloe stupidly. "It's not mine. It— Where did it come from?"

Agatha, with a sharp movement, indicated the box from which the photographs were spilling.

"That must be Aunt Vieva's—Mrs. Janvier's. Or, maybe, Aunt Gladys'. It isn't mine."

Chloe spoke slowly. Agatha, with ruthless fingers, stirred among the pictures—actors, actresses, men and women of all sorts. They were Mrs. Janvier's property, as it soon appeared from the inscriptions.

"There's something written on that one, too," said Chloe finally, and Agatha's nervous fingers turned the picture of Wallis Lestrangle over again.

"To Vieva, Best of Little Pals, from Soldier Boy Wallie." So, with a date, ran the inscription across one corner. Agatha looked at it steadily for a long time. Chloe watched her, affrighted. She dared not question her. But by and by the older woman spoke—spoke in a tone that the girl had never heard her use before, harsh, contemptuous, dry.

"He sent it to her on the same day he sent me mine," she said. "The same day. The ink was not dry on one picture before he inscribed the other. It was the day he left New York for Cuba."

"Dearest!" cried Chloe. "Dearest, dearest Agatha, don't look like that! Don't speak like that! He was so young. It was all fun—a joke—his knowing her——"

"I was not having fun and jokes with other people then," said Agatha. "I was living for him, in him. And"—her lips twisted painfully—"he told me

that he had had but one picture finished—the one for me—he said——”

Suddenly she hid her face in her hands. But when Chloe encircled her with tender arms, she shook the girl off, and, rising, left the room.

When she came back, she said: “Now we will never speak of that again.”

“Roger,” said Mrs. Roger Hayes to her husband one afternoon in the May following the events set forth, “would you mind haunting the Wyncasset Club until you stumble upon Major MacMurtha? And would you mind telling him that I am here and want to see him? You needn’t mention that I’ve seen him creeping by the house four nights this week at an hour when all Wyncasset is supposed to be in bed, and that I draw my own conclusions from that. But tell him—give him a hint—very, very delicately and subtly, you know—that Agatha has missed him cruelly this past year. She has, poor dear!”

“Leave it to me,” said the cheerful and confident Roger.

And neither his wife nor his beloved Aunt Agatha ever knew that the

delicate and subtle manner in which he conveyed certain weighty and fruitful information to Major MacMurtha was this:

“Say, major, if you don’t come around, my wife will be up after you. And even Agatha herself. You know she had a pretty nasty jolt last fall in New York. She found that Lestrangle fellow she used to be engaged to was a good deal of a skunk—according to her standards. He might have seemed all right enough to me or you. But she—— Well, you know what the Sylvester standards are; she couldn’t quite go Lestrangle’s actions. Of course, poor fellow, it was too late to bother him, her finding out—what she did find out. But—come up and see Chloe.”

Roger takes great credit to himself for that speech and its happy outcome. He thinks that the diplomatic service lost a prize in him, and does not dream that it lost a far greater one in Major Thomas MacMurtha, whose elect lady thought that she was conveying fresh information to him when she told him, a few months after their marriage:

“You know, Tom dear, I was a great fool when I was a girl.”



A Sight for Shakespeare

AN old-time town wears oft a sober grace
 Unknown to grand ones—from its green wharf piles,
 Pitted by sliding waters, up the aisles
 Of warty pavestones to its market place.
 If but a teamster’s wheel in that cramped space
 Meet shipwreck, mark the group its woe beguiles
 About! The barber, oiled of curls and smiles,
 Hostler and clerk, a gaping schoolboy face.
 Now, if great Shakespeare on the scene should fit,
 With that fine vision naught could blind or blur,
 And note the concourse—this my fancy is—
 Like Cheapside’s or Verona’s it would fit
 Some play with richest laughs, for if it spur
 My humble pen, what might it do with his?

JEANNIE PENDLETON EWING.



On Being Done Good To

By Edwin L. Sabin

HOW we do love the cheerful person! Hasn't he—or she—a wonderful disposition, though? What a boon it is to have him around, to brace us up and carry us a while. It is such a relief, you know. If we only had his disposition! But that, of course, is out of the question; the best we can do is to borrow him as much as we can and be a parasite—a shameless, professional parasite.

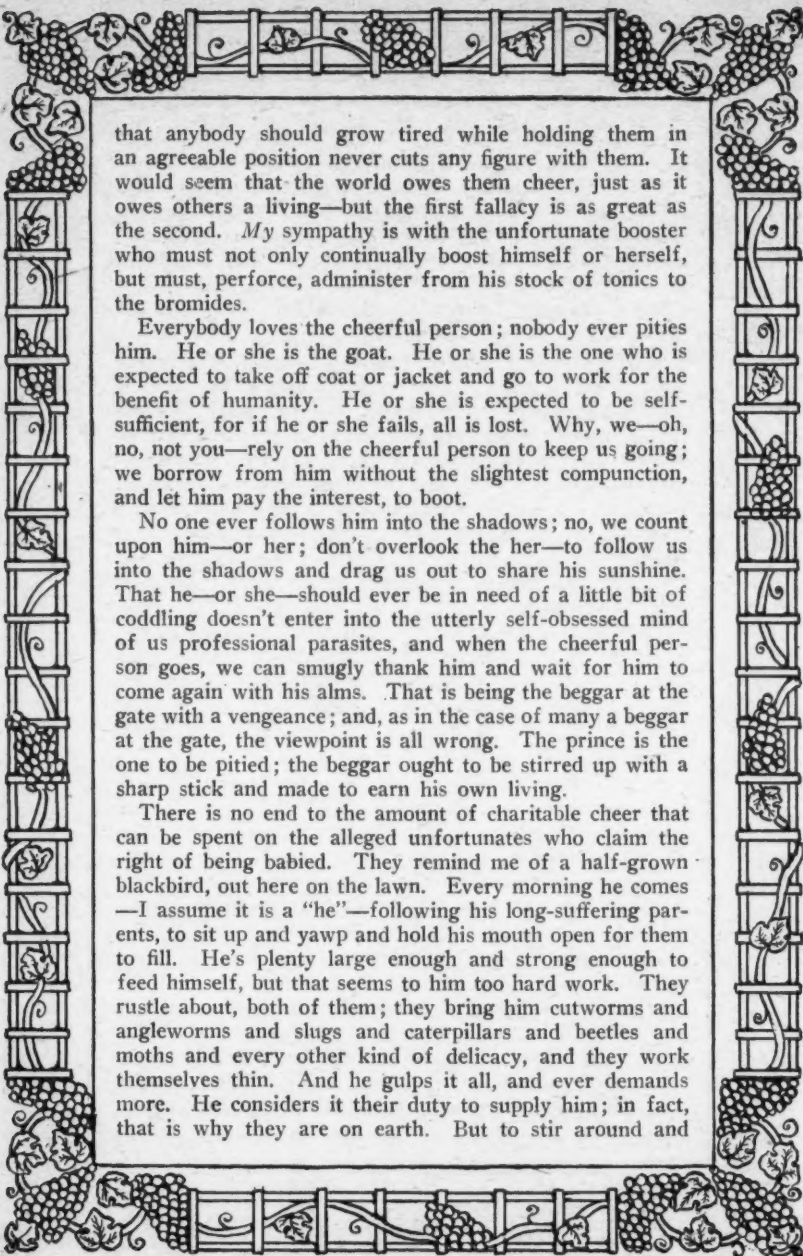
The truth may be unpleasant, but this sermon is not going to be about the marvelously gifted fellow being who has the agreeable faculty of spreading sunshine through the world, who is constantly doing good to others; it is going to be about that opposite contingent who sit and take all that is offered, who constantly expect to have good done to them.

I fully appreciate that you who read these lines are not among the sponges and clams who anchor themselves and wait to be done good to—a poor grammatical construction, I admit, but then I am dealing with a poor human construction, also. You are not among that species who say, oh, so feelingly:

"I'm so glad you've come in. You always do me so much good; you're so cheerful and optimistic. I quite depend on you to brace me up. Do come again soon."

You're doubtless of that other, long-suffering little army of heroes and heroines, veritable saints of the world, who enter into the gloom where squats the cave man or cave woman, spend their brightest, and leave limp and depleted, with nobody to brace *them* up.

Yes, sympathy should be for the cave people, because they are born into the world with the settled conviction that, as a submerged tenth, they should frequently be lifted to the surface and buoyed up so as to get their fresh air. Poor creatures! Isn't that pitiful? The fact

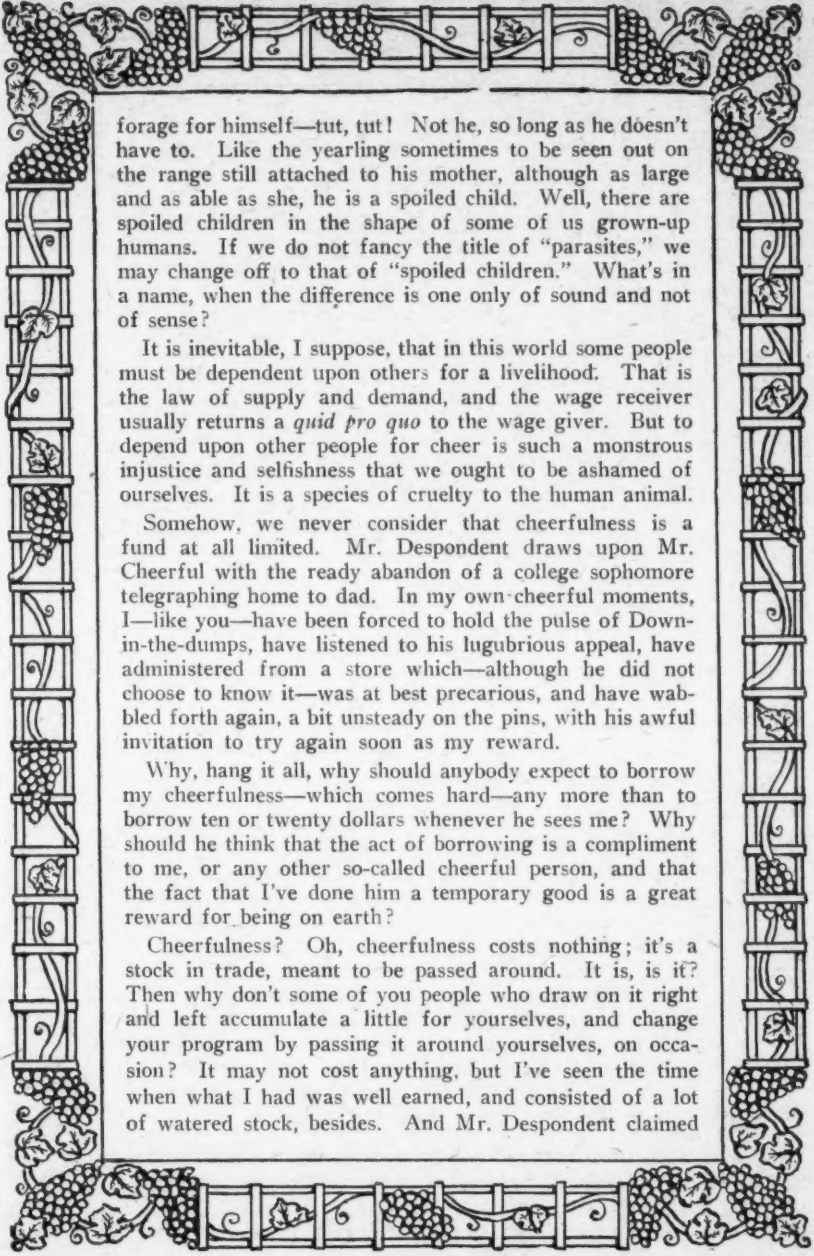


that anybody should grow tired while holding them in an agreeable position never cuts any figure with them. It would seem that the world owes them cheer, just as it owes others a living—but the first fallacy is as great as the second. *My* sympathy is with the unfortunate booster who must not only continually boost himself or herself, but must, perforce, administer from his stock of tonics to the bromides.

Everybody loves the cheerful person; nobody ever pities him. He or she is the goat. He or she is the one who is expected to take off coat or jacket and go to work for the benefit of humanity. He or she is expected to be self-sufficient, for if he or she fails, all is lost. Why, we—oh, no, not you—rely on the cheerful person to keep us going; we borrow from him without the slightest compunction, and let him pay the interest, to boot.

No one ever follows him into the shadows; no, we count upon him—or her; don't overlook the her—to follow us into the shadows and drag us out to share his sunshine. That he—or she—should ever be in need of a little bit of coddling doesn't enter into the utterly self-obsessed mind of us professional parasites, and when the cheerful person goes, we can smugly thank him and wait for him to come again with his alms. That is being the beggar at the gate with a vengeance; and, as in the case of many a beggar at the gate, the viewpoint is all wrong. The prince is the one to be pitied; the beggar ought to be stirred up with a sharp stick and made to earn his own living.

There is no end to the amount of charitable cheer that can be spent on the alleged unfortunates who claim the right of being babied. They remind me of a half-grown blackbird, out here on the lawn. Every morning he comes—I assume it is a "he"—following his long-suffering parents, to sit up and yawp and hold his mouth open for them to fill. He's plenty large enough and strong enough to feed himself, but that seems to him too hard work. They rustle about, both of them; they bring him cutworms and angleworms and slugs and caterpillars and beetles and moths and every other kind of delicacy, and they work themselves thin. And he gulps it all, and ever demands more. He considers it their duty to supply him; in fact, that is why they are on earth. But to stir around and



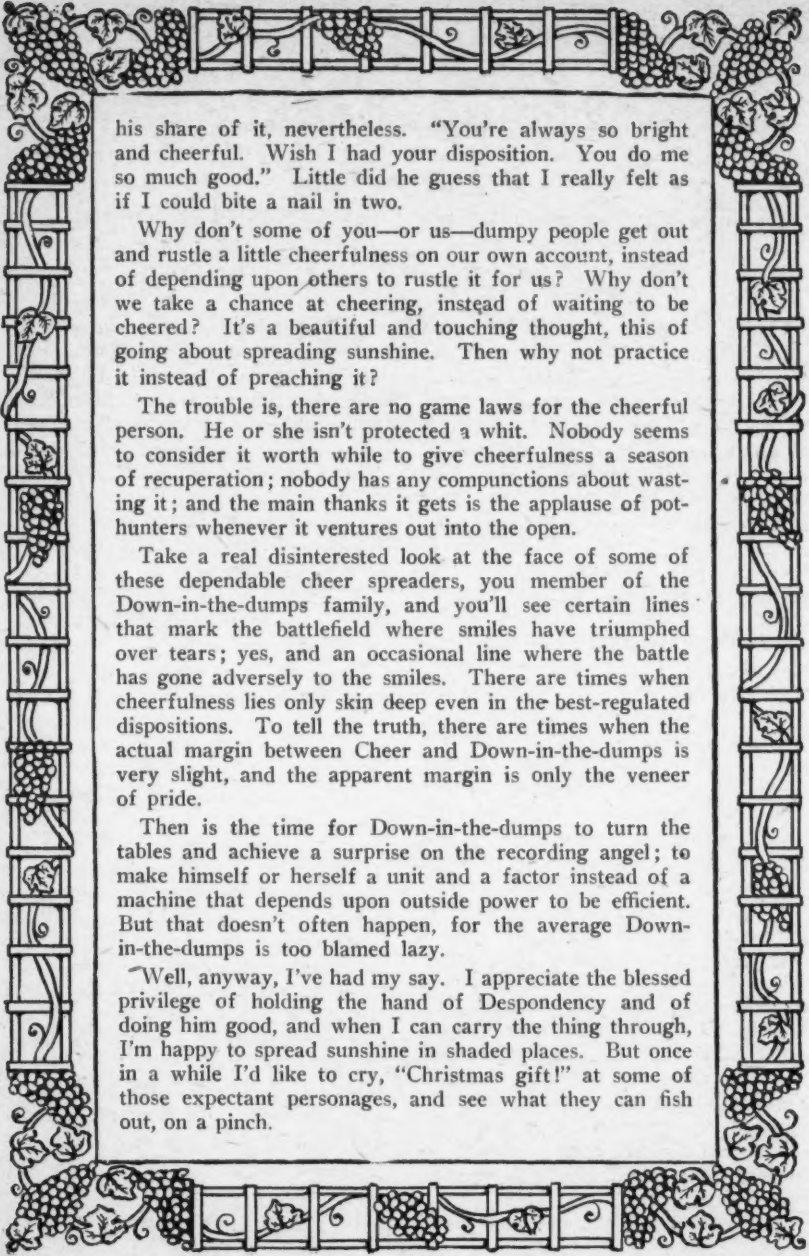
forage for himself—tut, tut! Not he, so long as he doesn't have to. Like the yearling sometimes to be seen out on the range still attached to his mother, although as large and as able as she, he is a spoiled child. Well, there are spoiled children in the shape of some of us grown-up humans. If we do not fancy the title of "parasites," we may change off to that of "spoiled children." What's in a name, when the difference is one only of sound and not of sense?

It is inevitable, I suppose, that in this world some people must be dependent upon others for a livelihood. That is the law of supply and demand, and the wage receiver usually returns a *quid pro quo* to the wage giver. But to depend upon other people for cheer is such a monstrous injustice and selfishness that we ought to be ashamed of ourselves. It is a species of cruelty to the human animal.

Somehow, we never consider that cheerfulness is a fund at all limited. Mr. Despondent draws upon Mr. Cheerful with the ready abandon of a college sophomore telegraphing home to dad. In my own cheerful moments, I—like you—have been forced to hold the pulse of Down-in-the-dumps, have listened to his lugubrious appeal, have administered from a store which—although he did not choose to know it—was at best precarious, and have wobbled forth again, a bit unsteady on the pins, with his awful invitation to try again soon as my reward.

Why, hang it all, why should anybody expect to borrow my cheerfulness—which comes hard—any more than to borrow ten or twenty dollars whenever he sees me? Why should he think that the act of borrowing is a compliment to me, or any other so-called cheerful person, and that the fact that I've done him a temporary good is a great reward for being on earth?

Cheerfulness? Oh, cheerfulness costs nothing; it's a stock in trade, meant to be passed around. It is, is it? Then why don't some of you people who draw on it right and left accumulate a little for yourselves, and change your program by passing it around yourselves, on occasion? It may not cost anything, but I've seen the time when what I had was well earned, and consisted of a lot of watered stock, besides. And Mr. Despondent claimed



his share of it, nevertheless. "You're always so bright and cheerful. Wish I had your disposition. You do me so much good." Little did he guess that I really felt as if I could bite a nail in two.

Why don't some of you—or us—dumpy people get out and rustle a little cheerfulness on our own account, instead of depending upon others to rustle it for us? Why don't we take a chance at cheering, instead of waiting to be cheered? It's a beautiful and touching thought, this of going about spreading sunshine. Then why not practice it instead of preaching it?

The trouble is, there are no game laws for the cheerful person. He or she isn't protected a whit. Nobody seems to consider it worth while to give cheerfulness a season of recuperation; nobody has any compunctions about wasting it; and the main thanks it gets is the applause of pot-hunters whenever it ventures out into the open.

Take a real disinterested look at the face of some of these dependable cheer spreaders, you member of the Down-in-the-dumps family, and you'll see certain lines that mark the battlefield where smiles have triumphed over tears; yes, and an occasional line where the battle has gone adversely to the smiles. There are times when cheerfulness lies only skin deep even in the best-regulated dispositions. To tell the truth, there are times when the actual margin between Cheer and Down-in-the-dumps is very slight, and the apparent margin is only the veneer of pride.

Then is the time for Down-in-the-dumps to turn the tables and achieve a surprise on the recording angel; to make himself or herself a unit and a factor instead of a machine that depends upon outside power to be efficient. But that doesn't often happen, for the average Down-in-the-dumps is too blamed lazy.

Well, anyway, I've had my say. I appreciate the blessed privilege of holding the hand of Despondency and of doing him good, and when I can carry the thing through, I'm happy to spread sunshine in shaded places. But once in a while I'd like to cry, "Christmas gift!" at some of those expectant personages, and see what they can fish out, on a pinch.

Spring Beauty

By Lily A. Long

Author of "The Christmas Guest," "The Prodigal Son's Mother," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

THERE comes a day in May—we all know it—when the first shy invitations of Spring to wander out with her and be made over grow to be less an entreaty than a command. When Winifred Wadham, that morning, looked with troubled eyes toward the strip of sky that overarched the cañon of her street, something signaled to her—some warmth of the sun or softness of the air—that replaced the trouble in her eyes with a look of respite.

"That's what I'll do!" she said softly to herself.

So, instead of the house dress and slippers that she wore on idle mornings, she put on a trim walking skirt and blouse and serviceable shoes. To her relief, no comment was made by the aunts, who breakfasted with her, and immediately after breakfast she slipped away to the unfamiliar region presided over by the cook, and secured the materials for a picnic luncheon. Then she put on her hat and jacket, and paused a moment to slip on and fasten firmly an air of composure which should hide the nervous trembling at her heart. For Winifred was a shy little thing, in spite of the fact that she was twenty-one, and the two aunts who had "brought her up" had done their work very thoroughly. Never, in all the dutiful years of the past, had she done so defiant, so brazenly independent a thing as she now proposed.

She looked into the morning room,

where Aunt Emily was going over accounts—which Winifred's money would pay—and Aunt Ann was studying a book of spring fashions—which Winifred would have an opportunity of providing later. Both of the aunts looked up with surprise as their niece, wearing her neat cloak of composure over her fluttering heart, hesitated at the door.

"Going out?" asked Aunt Emily, lifting her eyebrows.

"I am going off for a tramp into the country. For all day." She thought she did it pretty well.

"To-day! You crazy girl!" cried Aunt Emily, just as Winifred had expected. "Why, the steamer is in! You know it docked late last night. Brookie Lowry may be here any moment."

"Oh, I don't know that he will come to-day," murmured Winifred. She tried to make it sound casual.

"Of course he will come to-day! He will be here this morning. The man you are engaged to marry! I can't understand——" She broke off suddenly, and added, with a gentler manner: "Go up and dress properly, Winnie. You must show him that you have made a point of looking nice for him. Men appreciate such things."

"No, I—I think—I am going out," said Winifred. She hadn't meant to say "think." That was just habit.

"Where are you going?" asked Aunt Ann curiously.

"Oh, I don't know. Just out," she



"Where are you going?" asked Aunt Ann curiously.

"Oh, I don't know. Just out," she said vaguely.

said vaguely. "To see if the pussy willows are out."

She had strategically opened the door with her hand behind her while she faced them, and now she slipped outside before she could surely hear the combined "When will you be back?" that hurried after her.

Left together, Aunt Emily and Aunt Ann looked at each other.

"What are you going to do?" asked Ann. She was the younger, and she

always deferred to Emily. But Emily had no plan to offer.

"Let us hope that Brooke won't come. Perhaps he won't," she said grimly.

"You don't suppose Winifred would be such a little fool——"

"Brooke Lowry is a fool, to act as he does. And Winifred's father was the biggest fool of all, to make such a will, and I say it even if he was our brother."

"Don't you think I'd better go after

Winnie?" asked Ann hopefully. But Emily shook her head impatiently and muttered something that sounded like "Idiot!"

And indeed it would have been quite impossible to overtake Winifred, who had escaped down the street with some of the spring's own fleetness and lightness. The good sun was smiling upon her, as if they shared a secret, and in the comfort of this assurance she made her way courageously to the Grand Central Station.

"I want to get as far out into the country as that will carry me," she said, laying down a silver dollar before the ticket agent.

He looked up at her sharply—and Winifred smiled reassuringly. She had a deluding smile. You would believe anything she wanted you to if she only threw in a smile.

"I'm looking for pussy willows," she explained.

Then the agent actually set his imagination to work—which shows what miracles Winifred's smile really could accomplish.

"I know what will suit you," he said, and pushed a ticket toward her, with a few cents of change.

She took the train to which she was directed, and presently she was passing over cañonlike streets at the bottom of which children were playing, and past blocks of buildings as unindividual as rabbit warrens, and through the hybrid region where city and country are unbeautifully entangled; and then she was out in the veritable country, where the little hills were brown and bare, and the wind came from the edge of the horizon, and the trees reached out untrammelled arms to the sky.

"Your station, miss," the porter said, startling her out of a reverie. "Spring Vale."

Winifred started up and hurried out of the car. It was a little country village to which the agent had sent her,

with a spired church against the hillside and a score of little houses set among the trees. There were low, green hills all about, and the trees were wearing the first feathery green of the spring, tenderer and greener than anything else in the world. She walked the length of the platform at the station, waiting for the train to go on its noisy way so that she might make her excursion into the hills all unobserved. Aunt Emily and Aunt Ann were safely distant, yet she had a feeling that some one might stop her at any moment and ask her to explain her irrational proceedings. No one paid any attention to her, however, and in a few minutes the train began to move slowly out from the station. As the last car came opposite where she stood, a young man swung himself down from the steps. He had her hand bag in his hand.

"I think you forgot this," he said pleasantly.

"Oh! My picnic luncheon!" she cried, in startled surprise. Then, though she was not what you would ordinarily call an observant young woman, she added lucidly: "You've lost your train!"

He glanced up the track. The train was unquestionably beyond reach.

"It looks that way," he acquiesced.

"But what are you going to do?" she asked anxiously.

"Oh, let it go," he said carelessly. Except for the moment when he had glanced after the train, he had not taken his eyes from her face, but his gaze was so frank that it did not embarrass her. "I'll take another train some time, to make up. Did you say something about a picnic?"

Now Winifred was simple-minded and generous-hearted, and her natural impulse was to say, "Yes; will you come with me?" But she had been properly brought up, and the complete influence of Aunt Emily's cannot be thrown off in a moment. So she hesitated visibly.

"I—I was just going out by myself for a walk——"

"There ought to be a pleasant view from the hilltop, and perhaps we could find some crocuses in the sunny spots. If that stream comes from a spring, we would find fresh water, and we could make some coffee over a gypsy fire. A picnic isn't complete without a fire," the young man said serenely.

He had taken off his hat, and the sun fell full upon his pleasant brown face. It was the sort of a face that children like, and Winifred, for all that she had lived for twenty-one years with Aunt Emily and Aunt Ann, had not wholly lost the wisdom of children.

"Are you a good cook?" she asked gravely.

The young man smiled and took a handful of letters and papers from his pocket.

"I wonder if I have a recommendation with me," he murmured. "Ah, what luck! I have." And he handed her a letter which he drew from an unsealed envelope.

It was a letter of introduction, addressed to a great man in Washington, setting forth the uncommon abilities and merits of one W. H. Brewster. It was an introduction that any young man might be proud to show, but Winifred gave less heed to the body of the letter than she did to the signature.

"Karl Kenton Wright!" she exclaimed. "Why, I know him! At least, I used to. We were at school together. Long ago."

"Would his indorsement carry any weight with you?" asked the young man deferentially.

"Oh, yes, certainly!" Winifred's face was aglow with some pleasant memory, but she did not put it into speech. Instead, she handed back the letter with a demure smile. "That is quite sufficient, Mr. Brewster, to satisfy me that you can cook excellent coffee."

Which is to be demonstrated," he

said gravely. "Now if you will permit me to stop and send a telegram, and will allow me to add a little weight to the luncheon bag, we'll set out to explore."

It wasn't exactly the sort of picnic that Winifred had planned, but, as they strolled along over the young grass that clothed the hill, she could not help admitting that it was perhaps even more successful as a means of getting quite away from uncomfortable thoughts.

Her companion asked no questions whatsoever. He seemed, indeed, a most matter-of-fact young man. He talked of the little things he saw around them—budding trees and springing grass and dried seed pods and rough weeds—in an interesting but quite casual way that demanded no answers and yet kept her attention alive. Once he turned aside to the edge of a sheltering knoll, and came back with a cluster of pale-pink blossoms on the frailest of swaying stems.

"Spring beauties—do you know them?" he asked, and, as she bent over them with an exclamation of delight, he watched her covertly.

"Oh, yes! When we—when I was a child," she said. And again her face was aglow with a memory that she would not put into careless words.

But when they found at the top of the hill the spring that fed the little stream they had followed, and Mr. Brewster with great skill had made a fire of brown twigs and concocted a pot of fragrant coffee, he seemed to feel that the time had come for greater reciprocity in the conversation.

"It's pleasant to get away from things once in a while, isn't it?" he said, looking over the valley below them with great content.

"Yes," said Winifred. "That is what I came for."

"Things? Or persons?" asked the young man.

"Both."



"I think you forgot this," he said pleasantly.

He received this in a silence so comprehensive that she thought he had paid no attention to it until, after a minute, he said, in the same casual way: "To-day especially?"

"Yes," she said. There was a piteous

quiver at her lip. "This is my last day of freedom."

"You mean—you are to be married?"

"Yes."

He had been looking away from her over the green landscape, but at this he turned toward her.

"Do you regret your freedom?"

"Yes," said Winnie faintly. Then she added, in a tone of self-defense: "Wouldn't anybody? Any girl, I mean?"

He paused, as if he were considering her question from different points of view.

"I am not sure," he said slowly. "It may be that every girl feels that way to some extent, but—I am not sure. If you are exchanging freedom for something better——"

"Can anything be better?" she broke in.

"Yes. One thing," he said quietly.

Winifred did not ask him what the one thing was. She did not say anything for a long time, and then she looked up suddenly to find his eyes fixed searchingly upon her.

"I'd like to tell you about it," she said impulsively. "Just because you're a stranger and I shall never see you again, I can say things I couldn't say to any one who knows me and will always remember."

"I understand," he said quietly.

But, having made her announcement, she seemed unable to go on. She sat playing with the spring beauties in her lap, their faint color reflected in her cheeks, until finally, with a forlorn attempt at a laugh, she cried:

"I feel as if I should be a prisoner for the rest of my life! It settles things so! I can hear the bolt click in the lock."

"Certainly that is not a very cheerful way of looking at your wedding," said the young man. He was not smiling at all, but there was something strangely heart warming and confidence compel-

ling in his steady eyes. "Let us try to figure the situation out a little more carefully. Is it the holy state of matrimony, as a state, that you object to, or is it the young man? And if you object to either, why should you go in for it?"

In spite of the nervousness that made her hands tremble, she laughed a little.

"I don't think I object to the state of matrimony as—as an abstraction. It is only when it becomes concrete—when I think it is coming so close——" She stopped.

"Do you think you would still feel that way about it if you were really in love with the man you were marrying?" he asked gravely.

"I—don't know. It's a family arrangement, you see. And I haven't any reason for standing out against it. And my—— They tell me arranged marriages are always the happiest in the end. I don't dislike him. I dare say he's very nice. Most people think him charming. He always is charming in his manner to me. I don't just know why I feel so—so—desperate about it!" It was hard to tell whether it was a laugh or a sob that caught her voice at the end.

The young man had been listening very attentively.

"It seems a pity," he said judiciously, "to waste one of the few opportunities that life affords for emotion. I believe in love, you see. Let me tell you something of my own story, and then we may exchange advice, perhaps, if not consolation."

Winifred nodded. In spite of her effort at confidences, she was glad to get away from her own affairs, and as she should never see this stranger again, she had something of the same interest in his story that we take in the life of our neighbors when we get a gratuitous glimpse through uncurtained windows.

"I am in love," the young man an-

nounced gravely, "so I know what I am talking about. I have been in love ever since I was a boy."

"With the same girl?" asked Winnie, in frank surprise.

He shook his head at her. "You cynical young person! You wouldn't talk like that if you knew. Yes, it has never been but the one—it never could be any one else. Not in that way. But she doesn't know."

"You mean you haven't told her? Why?"

"Because she was a crown princess and I was a scullery lad. That is, to use more modern terms, her father was a banker and mine was a street-car conductor. We went to the same public school, after our blessed American fashion, but after school was over there wasn't much chance, you see, for me to do anything except just go on adoring. I did that faithfully."

"But," protested Winnie, with frank dissatisfaction, "I should think that a real hero would have found out some way."

An odd smile glinted for a moment in the young man's eye. "Perhaps. But events help out storybook heroes more than they do the sons of street-car conductors in real life. There have been obstacles. Not the least of these is the fact that the young lady became engaged to another man."

"Oh, I *am* sorry!" said Winnie sympathetically. "Then there is no hope for you?"

He turned to look at her very seriously. "What you have said to me this afternoon about your own feelings has given me more encouragement than anything else to believe that it is too soon to give up hope," he said pointedly. "She is engaged—true. But if she should be feeling about her engagement as you do about yours— An engagement may not, after all, be so final a thing as I thought. And yet"—he took out his pipe and filled it slowly, thoughtfully

—"even if I knew that she was not in love with the man to whom she is engaged, even if I knew that he was not worthy of her—as I do know—how could I tell her so without offense? She is not in love with me, you see. She may not even remember my existence. I can't go to a young woman who would regard me as a stranger and offer to marry her."

"Couldn't you offer at first just to be friends with her?"

He shook his head. "I might have done that, but now there isn't time. They will marry her off. She is a delicate, sensitive creature, my lady—like those spring beauties in your hand. Not a brier rose, able to defend herself, or a tiger lily, able to stand alone. More than anything else in the world, I want to take care of her. But there is so little time to make her understand."

"Oh, I don't think she could possibly misunderstand. You are so trustworthy just to look at!"

His eyes flashed upon her so gratefully that she hastened to add, almost in confusion: "Besides, I think she has a right to know."

He took that in in silence, thoughtfully and consideringly. Then he turned to her with a smile that made her feel the child's impulse to slip her hand into his.

"Then if you should learn that there is now in the world somewhere a young man who has been cherishing the thought of you for years and years, and who has carried in his vest pocket, over land and sea, a jaggedly cut bit of cardboard that has your face on it, taken from an old class photograph—you wouldn't think him impertinent if some day he told you—rather abruptly?"

"Not impertinent, surely."

"It would mean something, wouldn't it, to make his dreams come true?" he said, watching her. "Even if you didn't love him at first, his love might call out a response—in time—might it not?"



"I feel as if I should be a prisoner for the rest of my life! It settles things so! I can hear the bolt click in the lock."

"Yes," she said dreamily.

"Then would you advise me to put my fortune to the test?" he asked.

He had leaned forward as he spoke, to strike a match on the smooth side of a clean stone, and his profile was toward her. She looked, caught her breath, and leaned forward to look again.

"Why, Karl!" she exclaimed.

He faced her with a smile, half pleased and half embarrassed.

"Then you do remember?" he said.

She caught his hand and pushed up the edge of his sleeve. A scar like a red thread encircled his wrist.

"Oh, it has never come off!" she cried. "That is where your arm was burned when you carried me from the schoolhouse."

He looked at the scar as a man might look at a treasured jewel.

"Oh, no, indeed!" he said jealously.

"Then you knew all the time who I was?" She was studying him frankly, readjusting her attitude toward the stranger who had seemed but the chance companion of a disconnected hour.

"Why, of course." He smiled at her.

"Even in the train?"

"I didn't see you until you stepped off. Then I started up to follow you, and I saw you had forgotten your hand bag."

"But why didn't you tell me at once who you were?"

"Because, for the moment, I didn't want you to remember me as your old schoolmate, and give me a conventional welcome. I wanted to be just a human being to you. Besides," he added slowly, "I thought you might not care to have any one who knew you know that you had run away into the country the day that Brooke Lowry returned from England." He was looking at her directly, intently, forcing her to recognize the significance of his remark.

She flushed, and her eyes fell.

"What were we saying?" she asked lightly.

"I think," he said deliberately, "that you were advising me to play young Lochinvar and carry away the maiden I love from the very arms of the proud bridegroom who thinks he has a claim to her. Did I understand you aright?"

She considered the matter in frowning thoughtfulness.

"Why, if you love her, Karl, I should think you would at least try."

He carefully knocked the ashes out of his pipe and dropped it into his coat pocket. Then he turned to Winnie with a strange look on his face. His lips were faintly smiling, but there was a look in his eyes that was as deep as the years.

"Then will you come with me, Winifred?" he asked.

"Me!" she exclaimed, in unfeigned amazement.

He took a pocketbook from an inner pocket and found an envelope in an inner fold.

"You see," he said.

Winifred saw. Her own face was on the bit of cardboard, cut from a larger photograph. She remembered when it had been taken.

"The day I got that picture, I heard of your engagement to Brooke Lowry," he went on. "It was the day you graduated. I had come back from Montana—that's where my ranch is—to see you. I had been on my own for three years, and I felt that I could see a clear path into the future—and I had to see you. And then I heard. It was a good deal of a blow, though of course I had never had any slightest reason for thinking you wouldn't marry somebody. But—Brooke Lowry! I couldn't quite understand it."

"My father wished it," she said miserably. "It was an old plan. He and Mr. Lowry were partners, you know. And he wished it so much that——"

"I've heard something about it," he helped her out when she stumbled. "You and Brooke were to marry before you had completed your twenty-first year, and if either refused, his part of the inheritance was to go to the other. Nobody nowadays would have the courage to make such a will, but the last generation was romantic and wasn't ashamed of it."

She laughed a little at that, as he had meant she should, and he went on quietly:

"I didn't know about that will at first. I took for granted that it was love on both sides. I said to myself: 'I will carry her picture till she is married. Then, in fairness to her, I must destroy it.' I tried to put you out of my mind as a woman and to take you on as a sort of tutelary saint—a guardian over my thoughts and acts. I can't tell

you what a safeguard you have been to me."

She did not speak. She was too much moved to speak.

"At first I understood that you were to be married in the spring; then I heard that the wedding had been postponed. The news was indefinite, and it left me restless. I studied the society columns just to get any chance mention there might be of you. I read that you had gone abroad with Brooke's mother and that he was to join you later. Then I saw that he had gone on, and I waited for news of the wedding. But the news that came finally was that you had come home with some friends who were returning, and that the wedding would take place at home this fall. I wondered a little why the wedding had been again postponed, but still I did not understand.

"Last month I had occasion to run over to London on business. Coming back, I saw the names of Brooke Lowry and his mother on the passenger list. I watched for him." He turned to look straight into her eyes as he added: "Then I guessed why the wedding had been postponed."

"I am not yet twenty-two," she murmured defensively.

He went on, as if she had not spoken: "I guessed, because I knew you. But I was not sure until I found you flying off for a lonely tramp over the hills the day that he arrives in New York. Winifred, you shall not marry him!"

"How can I help it?" she asked piteously, forgetting the rôle she had tried to play. "My father——"

"If he were here now, he would not ask it. You know—in your heart you must know—he would not ask it."

"I—I think he would not. But Aunt Emily and Aunt Ann——"

He leaned forward to lift the frail and delicate spring beauties in her lap.

"Yes, I know. I said my love was

neither a brier rose nor a tiger lily. I suppose I must seem a good deal like a stranger?"

"But you don't!" she cried. "That's the queer part!"

He caught his lip in his teeth and looked away. The little village in the valley lay below them, and the spire of a small white church rose among the trees. He studied the scene for a moment, and then turned to Winifred with a leaping light in his eyes.

"Do you see that church? We could be married there—now. Before the train comes in. And go straight out from here to our home—to my ranch. It's a home you will love, Winifred; the mountains are so close about it! And it's all ready for you, because the thought of you has been woven into everything I have done on it. We would telegraph to Aunt Emily that we were married and gone away, and while they are fuming and fussing and asking questions and talking about the money, we shall be safely away from it all, and no one shall ever bother you, because my love will be about you day and night, year slipping into year——"

He caught his breath and stopped, afraid of frightening her with the passion that, in spite of his self-control, was shaking his voice. By a sure instinct he knew that the time for making her understand all the nature of his love had not yet come. Would she understand enough to know that she might trust him? That was all he dared hope.

But Winifred was not frightened. She was watching him with candid eyes that held a child's discernment, and now she gave a little sigh, like the resting breath of a tired child.

"It's like the time I was caught in the schoolhouse, and thought I couldn't get out. And I saw the flames coming closer—and then all at once you were there, breaking in the window, and I knew it was all right."



Author of "The Wish Grave," "Mumps," "The Bird Song," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY S. B. ASPELL

THE self-satisfied scream of a steam calliope, playing "Where the River Shannon Flows," dispelled abruptly the intensity of "Launcelot and Elaine," which had gradually been assuming an agonized pitch bordering dangerously upon melodrama, and sent the dramatis personæ tumbling helter-skelter to a dormer window, through whose panes, dim, grimy, and as tear-streaked as a child's cheeks, the white road could be seen below.

"It's a big red wagon," announced Elizabeth Ann, gingerly removing a mass of thick cobwebs with the blade of a cake knife, erstwhile King Arthur's famous sword "Excalibur."

"With gold on it," Marguerite MacCarthy breathed, her chin delving into Elizabeth Ann's shoulder bones.

"And pipes!" Bess Salisbury, clearing a space with the moist palm of her hand and wiping off the grime on her skirt, secured the most accurate vision.

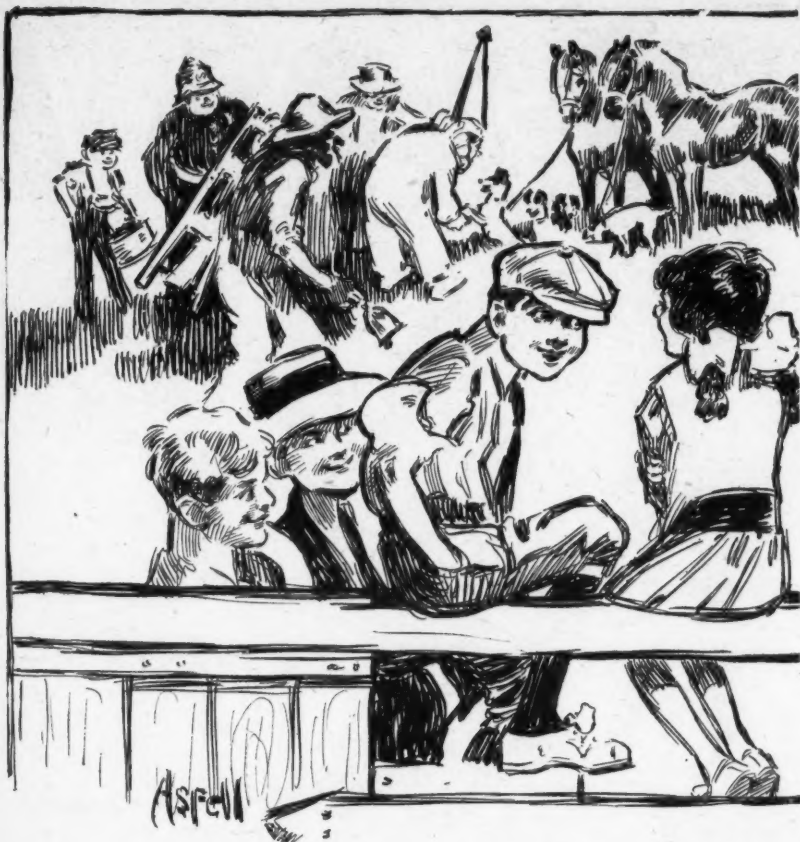
A pony neighed beyond the corner, a crowd of small boys swung into sight, surrounding the calliope wagon, and another cart toppled unsteadily around into the procession, disclosing a dozen

or so dogs wandering about inside a huge cage. The agitation at the window tripled as each recent aspirant to the rank of high-born lady or gentle knight now pushed her mightiest to secure the best view.

"It's the dog-and-pony show!" Launcelot's recent impersonator cried, her voice a cross between rapture and astonishment. "I didn't know it was coming."

"That's the penalty," sagely observed Elizabeth Ann, classifying the cause and effect of the situation, "of riding a hobby to death. We might have known it was time for it again, but we haven't kept up with the world at all since we found out how to get into this castle."

Elizabeth Ann herself was responsible for that discovery, and had already jotted down the process of thought by which she had concluded that a vacant house, even though boarded and nailed securely below, might still be entered by means of a scraggy cherry tree that rose along the north wall to a second-story window, which was actually unlocked, just as Elizabeth Ann had surmised it might be. The house was an unoccupied one, next to Elizabeth



"Oh, my goodness!" Herb answered, with a short laugh. "All the difference in the crazy, he always leaves

Ann's, full of mysterious closets and chimney cupboards, rambling staircases, and many a short, narrow hall that led with a sudden quirk and turn into a room you had just left. With a bit of imagination the house had easily become a medieval castle and a magic setting for King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.

Elizabeth Ann had not touched mundane earth for weeks. Only that morning at breakfast, she had startled her

father by asking: "Wilt pass the bowl of sugar, sire?" And had silenced his laughter with a haughty gesture and a commanding: "Enough, minion!"

Passing mother and the baby on the staircase, Elizabeth Ann would step aside and observe seriously: "Pass on, good travelers, and disturb not the devotions of me and my holy brother."

Occasionally she would burst into the kitchen with: "Ho, damsel, a cup of cold water, I prithe!" Callie's thick



world between being in your right mind and being 'nuts.' When he's most raving his glass eye out."

lower lip rolled in scorn at such goings-on, and she would hand the drink to Elizabeth Ann with an actual push.

But a real dog-and-pony show! That was surely enough to bring one down to earth!—Already the showmen were unpacking their wagons and unfolding their tents and making evident preparations to encamp right over in the lot across the road. Without waiting for discussion on the question, the "Launcelot and Elaine Company" disbanded,

and, not even stopping to let down their imaginary drawbridge, slid down the cherry tree, which wall they had so recently scaled with peril, and seated themselves on the shaky wooden fence that inclosed the old house and overlooked the brilliant field of action.

"Why, it's a regular tournament!" raved Elizabeth Ann ecstatically. "I feel precisely like Guinevere. Hail, Sir Knights!" And she waved her handkerchief.



"Dearie, I'm going to let you take care of the baby all alone this afternoon."

"Elizabeth Ann! Look what you've done!"

Indeed, Elizabeth Ann, crimson with mortification, saw that by her unfortunate burst of enthusiasm she had signaled the crowd of small boys, who, to tell the truth, had been hoping, though not sanguinely, for that very thing. They made a rush for the trio on the fence top.

"Where did you girls come from?"

Herbert Elliot Ellsworth, popularly "Herb," grinned cordially straight at Elizabeth Ann as he spoke. He was her particular abomination. All boys

were abominations, but he was the worst, being an especially active and restless youth who always spilled the ink in school when he undertook to fill any one's inkwell, or upset somebody's neatly piled books off onto the floor, or carelessly cleaned the erasers in the exact window from which the strongest breeze blew in, choking people with chalk dust. He had spirits as blithe and as impossible to squelch as spring dandelions, bobbing up newly and without apology on all occasions, after each rebuff, cut, or criticism. He actually seemed to thrive on punishment, and swallowed a scolding with the evident enjoyment of a thirsty camel.

"Don't tell him about the house," whispered Elizabeth Ann as she saw his adventurous eyes roving over toward the "Keep out" signs. "He'd be right over there and spoil all our fun."

A line of little black ponies came trotting smartly down the road, wheeled into place, and were picketed interestingly by a man with a red coat and brass buttons. A swarm of tiny terriers allowed themselves to be tied by another attendant, who made them jump through hoops, play leapfrog, and ring bells as the whim struck him. Children on the fence furnished good advertise-

ment, as a general thing. People began to flock from everywhere in the wake of the procession, more children, some lads supposedly driving grocery wagons, a few policemen, and then a character who caused instant terror among the group on the fence.

"Let's run," suggested Elizabeth Ann, beginning to scramble down.

"He won't hurt you—while we're here, at least," objected Herbert, adding his afterthought lest he should inadvertently spoil some of his previous yarns. "By golly, though, I believe he's got his glass eye out."

The effect was electrical. Elizabeth Ann immediately put her foot over the inside ledge of the fence, preparatory to descent, and then, as her curiosity stirred itself, paused long enough to ask, in a quavering voice:

"Why, what difference does that make?"

"Oh, my goodness!" Herb answered, with a short laugh. "All the difference in the world between being in your right mind and being 'nuts.' When he's most raving crazy, he always leaves his glass eye out."

With solemn countenance, Herb deliberately winked at his masculine colleagues.

Elizabeth Ann stood poised in mid-air on the fence top, ready for instant flight should "Crazy John" come any nearer, and yet loath to depart entirely from the enchantments spread in panorama before her. He was regarded as a sort of troll, the poor scissors grinder, by the town children. Though no one knew where the report had originated, he was supposed to be out of his right mind and extremely dangerous. He humped under the heavy frame of the grindstone that he carried on his back, peering out from under his grisly eyebrows and scowling forehead with roving eyes as he walked the streets, and biting savagely at two long, black mus-

tachios which hung around his mouth down to his chin.

His bell played an arpeggio up and down the scale, always sticking on the return "sol." That was the way you could always distinguish him from any other scissors grinder who made the town. His pockets were believed to be full of knives, sharp like razors, which he kept to chase his victims with should they displease him. Not that he had ever been observed indulging in the little pastime, but that was the way the tale went. And recently Elizabeth Ann had learned about his glass eye. It was the horror of her life that she might meet him sometimes minus this ghastly possession, and she firmly believed that under such circumstances the heart within her would petrify with fright, and Elizabeth Ann, as such, would instantly cease to be.

When, however, Crazy John appeared to have no evil intentions toward their coterie; when, indeed, he actually set up business and began to sharpen knives for the show people at the other end of the lot, Elizabeth Ann resumed her seat, and with one eye kept warily upon the terrifying personage, continued to enjoy herself.

The ubiquitous and uneasy Herb presently secured for himself and friends the honor of carrying water for the ponies, which also relieved the situation for Elizabeth Ann. Back and forth the boys toiled with bucketful after bucketful of clear water from the Gale pump under the grape arbor, and the little black ponies poked their panne-velvet noses down gratefully into the pails and whinnied gently. It was all most captivating. Elizabeth Ann could have sat there for hours had not Callie suddenly rung the luncheon bell out of the back door, summoning to joys of another type.

"Tease your mothers to let you come to the show," Herb called out to the girls as they dropped off the fence one

by one. "We've got tickets for carrying water."

"We don't care," returned Elizabeth Ann snippily.

It was just like boys to turn up with some gorgeous opportunity like that. The girls resolved that they would tease their mothers, as Herb had suggested, and come en masse with properly paid-for tickets, just to show them.

But poor Elizabeth Ann was doomed to the bitterest of disappointments.

"Dearie," her mother smiled, as her gallant knight came rushing through the door into the dining room, "I'm going to let you take care of the baby all alone this afternoon. It's Callie's afternoon out, and I'm going to the Well-house reception."

Elizabeth Ann stood stock-still. Mrs. Gale was already dressed for the reception; she was wearing the lovely soft dress that her small daughter most loved, and had already put on her best hat with the white plume, ready for a hurried departure after luncheon. Moreover, she had dressed young Donald in blue creepers that brought out the azure in his big, round eyes and turned into soft gold the glint of his curly hair. He was very fond of his small sister, and gurgled with pleasure at the prospect of playing with her, pounding on the tray of his high chair with his pusher to express his satisfaction. Mrs. Gale rescued his spoon and fed him daintily several spoonfuls of oatmeal, talking hastily the while.

"I'll not be gone longer than an hour or two. Now, until I get back——"

And there followed the usual instructions for caring for the baby in case any one of a dozen improbabilities occurred. Under the circumstances, what could Elizabeth Ann do other than what she did? She slid into her chair, and, swallowing her throat lump with each mouthful, smiled bravely into Baby Donald's face and picked up his spoon

sweetly for him every time he dropped it.

She had difficulty afterward in tracing the origin of the idea that dominated the afternoon. She concluded that it must have sprung, ready-made, into her mind, a fact that worried her a trifle, as she always liked to fix the connection. Yet it might have been caused by the sight of her chums and Mrs. Salisbury, who stopped, the children with faces glowing, to call for Elizabeth Ann and her mother.

"Not going!" they cried in dismay
"Why, that's too bad, Elizabeth Ann," Mrs. Salisbury said soothingly. "Maybe you can go some other time."

On they went, leaving desolation behind. Then came that gorgeous inspiration for watching the afternoon's festivities from the windows of the "castle" next door, and Elizabeth Ann cleverly found a way to unfasten a little side door from the inside, thus admitting Baby Donald without the difficulty of hoisting him up the cherry tree, as she had at first planned to do. Under ordinary circumstances, she would have been frightened, alone in that great, empty house; and indeed it was so still that at first even Donald seemed awed by it, and rolled his eyes fearfully about at the gloomy nooks and waving cobwebs, clinging to sister's skirts with tightly squeezed fists.

Presently, growing bolder, he proceeded to investigate his surroundings a bit. Elizabeth Ann encouraged his research all she could, as it left her the freer to devote herself to the excitement over in the neighboring lot, where the crowds were already surging around the tents, and the ponies outside receiving their final rubdowns. She forgot to be frightened, for even this secondhand excitement was better than none and quite filled her mind.

She saw Herb and the other boys march proudly through the door on their "complimentaries"; she saw the



She caught up the cake knife that King Arthur had discarded from his sword belt that morning.

girls and Mrs. Salisbury enter; she saw a dozen people whom she knew or recognized; and then, with her first shiver of nervousness, she spotted the figure of Crazy John hovering about the outskirts of the throng, soliciting knives to sharpen. The first quiver of fear left her still uneasy. His bell played "do, me, sol, do, sol, me, do," up and down, up and down, catching consistently on the downcoming "sol" and throwing the rhythm all out of time. It was annoying to one who loved system, order, regularity, and plenty of lubrication of creaking joints, and Elizabeth Ann's whole system rang with the ding-dong of Crazy John's bell and groaned over the fifth count.

Still, the bell at least served to locate the presence of the old fellow, and Elizabeth Ann unconsciously kept track of him so that she could plan a swift escape in case he chose to come too near the house. For half an hour she knelt with her nose to the pane, gloating over the joys from which she had been cheated by unkind fate, and watching warily for the terror abroad in the land; then, all of a sudden, Baby Donald made a small complaint from the floor where he was seated.

"Duh!" he observed peevishly. He pulled hard at his right hand.

Elizabeth Ann, kneeling down, made the interesting discovery that her small brother had caught his wee right forefinger in a tiny screw eye down near the floor. It was hard to say why it had ever been screwed there into the wall. Probably that was what he had been trying to find out. At any rate, he had probed down into it beyond the knuckle of his baby finger, and it had stuck so thoroughly and swelled to such proportions that he was unable to pull it out again.

Elizabeth Ann tried it herself, but it caused him such pain that she was forced to stop. Still kneeling, she looked at him petulantly.

"Well, Donald! Now what are we going to do?"

"Duh!" replied Donald plaintively, with a huge tear rolling from each blue eye.

Obviously, Elizabeth Ann could not unscrew the screw eye without unscrewing Baby Donald as well. She tugged hard at his forefinger, pulling it first straight up, then sidewise, squeezing down the plumpness from underneath, and trying to force it through with a quick pull. Instead of coming out, the joint seemed to grow larger and redder and more tender.

"I can't go and get help," she complained to him, "because you'd cry. Besides, I don't want any one to know we can get in here."

"Duh!" wept Donald.

"You've spoiled all our fun forever," said Elizabeth Ann sternly, wiping his eyes on her skirt since she could find no handkerchief.

"I don't see what you have to cry about," she continued, with a pitiful break in her own voice. "You didn't want to go to the pony show, anyhow."

A sudden noise downstairs arrested her quick attention. She jumped to her feet and tiptoed to the door, listening. It was the sound of a door-knob turning, and Elizabeth Ann realized, all in a second of sickening fear, that she had forgotten to relock and rebolt the door again after she had let Baby Donald in. Yes, the door opened; some one entered stealthily and closed the door again.

"Duh!" murmured Baby Donald, pointing to his finger.

"Hush!" cried Elizabeth Ann in an agonized whisper. "You must keep perfectly still. Here!"

She slipped him a cherished little gold-wire bracelet from her arm to play with. Then, running to the window, she made a swift survey of the landscape for Crazy John. He was not

in sight. She listened with straining ears for his bell. It was silent.

Downstairs the footsteps, very faint and light, still tiptoed around the rooms. Occasionally a board creaked, and they halted. Once there was a grinding, crunching noise, and Elizabeth Ann knew that the door on a certain cupboard was being swung on a rusty hinge. Evidently the person below was making a thorough investigation of the premises. But what had he done with his grindstone and his bell? Possibly left them on the stoop outside.

Just outside the window in the room across the hall rose the cherry tree. Elizabeth Ann looked across and saw its scraggly branch—oh, how tempting it looked athwart the diamond-shaped panes of glass in the dormer window! How easily she could run and slide down its inviting trunk to safety!

"Duh!" whispered Donald, frightened into a silence almost as tense as his sister's.

Waving the bracelet in front of his eyes, desperately Elizabeth Ann gave two frantic jerks at his small finger. He made ready for a scream, but Elizabeth Ann checked it hurriedly by making him her most awful face, with both cheeks puffed out like big Ben Davis apples and her eyes squeezed shut. He smiled faintly and wonderingly.

The inevitable happened at last. The footsteps started up the creaky staircase that led from a back hall, and with that a change seemed to come over Elizabeth Ann's entire nature. She lost all vestige of fear, and every ounce of fight that she had inherited from her Pilgrim forefathers surged through her like a tonic. She caught up the cake knife that King Arthur had discarded from his sword belt that morning, and gave an almost sneering smile at the cherry tree which still beckoned her with scraggly fingers from the window across the hall.

Would Elizabeth Ann Gale desert her

baby brother in such a crisis, and leave him to the mercies of the mad scissors grinder? Never! She would fight this enemy to the death, even as the good Sir Launcelot fought, meet his onslaught with a knife as sharp as his own, slash, hack, kill if need be! Courage and much practice at this sort of thing made her quite as fierce as those doughty warriors of olden times. She even wondered, with a desperate sort of curiosity, now that worst had come to worst, whether Crazy John would be minus that glass eye that Herb Ellsworth seemed to fear so babyishly, and whether the eyeless socket would be open or shut. Father and Mother Gale would not have recognized their small daughter and timid child under the present stress of circumstance.

The footsteps reached the top stair, came on light tiptoe down the short hall, and then, as he turned to enter the fated room, Herbert Elliot Ellsworth gave the most heartfelt yell of his young life, shot his arms upward like zigzags of lightning, and jumped back as realistically as if he actually felt the prick of Elizabeth Ann's rapier at his heart.

Coming again to position, he stared at Elizabeth Ann. Dropping her cake knife, Elizabeth Ann stared at Herbert. Her eyes were as black as her face was white, and her jaw was set like the lock of a drawbridge against an oncoming enemy. Herbert had never seen her like that before. He was amazed, a bit ashamed of his own exhibition, and strangely thrilled with new admiration. Suddenly the eyes grew blacker.

"Herbert, thou'rt an ill-mannered loon!" she choked. "You—you're the horriddest boy I ever knew!" she sobbed.

"Why?" he asked, in astonishment.

"You might have known I'd think you were Crazy John."

"Why, I didn't know you were up here. How did you get in?"

"That," said Elizabeth Ann rudely, "is none of thy business."

Suddenly Baby Donald, now that the crisis was over, seemed to feel that his moment had come at last. He set up a glorious wail that should fittingly express his opinions on all subjects.

"His finger's caught," said Elizabeth Ann, suddenly remembering her troubles in that line. "That's why we couldn't run when we heard you."

"Oh!" said Herbert. "But—but you could have run." He looked at her again keenly. "Oh!" he repeated.

Then he knelt and studied the situation with interest.

"Oh, I can fix that, Elizabeth Ann," he said reassuringly. "And I won't tell any one you're in here, either."

He was gone.

In a wonderfully short time he reappeared with a tin cup full of water in which he was sousing up and down a cake of soap.

"Now watch!" he commanded, and trickled the soapy water down all around the small, sore joint. Then he pulled, and the slender finger slipped out like magic.

Elizabeth Ann was enchanted. A surge of relief swept over her, a great heartfelt of gratitude to her deliverer, a mighty admiration for his cleverness. It was a delicious feeling to be thus assisted in time of trouble, and so gallantly.

"I—I crave your pardon," said Elizabeth Ann, "for calling you horrid. And now I give you thanks for helping a damsel in distress."

Herbert looked a bit confused, but struggled through bravely.

"Oh, that's all right," he answered carelessly.

"And, of course," said Elizabeth Ann conscientiously, "you were just as scared as I was."

"I? I wasn't scared," denied Herbert. "Only I wasn't just expecting the—the long knife."

He dropped down onto the floor beside her. She had taken Baby Donald into her lap and was comforting him with his head on her breast. Herb pulled out a disreputable handkerchief and began a game of peekaboo which sent the baby into shrieks of laughter.

Elizabeth Ann felt, barring the handkerchief, that her heart was warming to him. She relaxed, with a sigh, into a comfortable position with her back against the wall and the baby snuggled cozily in her lap. Outside, the steam calliope screeched forth once more into sound, playing "Maryland, My Maryland," but over Elizabeth Ann had come again the spell of the old house, of mediaeval castles and gentle knights and high-born ladies. Even the usually active Herbert seemed now quite content and utterly oblivious to the lure of the calliope without. He continued to play with Baby Donald, and touched, every once in a while, with seeming carelessness, the uttermost tip of Elizabeth Ann's shoe, worn white from much scuffling up the cherry-tree trunk.

In her heart of hearts, far removed from the knowledge of the misunderstanding world, Elizabeth Ann knighted him as her Sir Launcelot, and, by some sure, age-old instinct, seemed to know all at once that upon the morrow, when she again played Elaine, the enactment of the sweet old tale would hold for her a new thrill of throbbing romance.





On the Old Dundas Road

By Ed. Cahn

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

THERE'S shade enough over there under that little tree, Em. We'll camp right there for dinner," said Sam Barnes to his wife. He hauled the lunch basket out from under the seat of their road wagon and led the way with long, undulating strides.

"Couldn't we go over by the band stand, so's to hear the music?"

"Walk pretty near three-quarters of a mile there and three-quarters back? No, sir-ee, ma'am! I want to be close to the team and to the fold, so if anything starts, I'll know it mighty quick."

They crawled through a gap in the barbed-wire fence of the exhibition ground and went through yellowing grass down a gentle slope.

Sam set the basket under a young maple. Emma knelt and opened it while he took off his hat and coat.

She spread a small, red-and-white tablecloth on the ground, very slowly and carefully, her sunburned hat tipped low to hide the disappointment in her eyes.

Sam stretched himself on the grass.

Behind them rose the sounds of the exhibition; faint screams from the roller coasters over on the midway; a babel of indistinguishable voices carried on the mild September breeze from the brazen throats of hundreds of hoarse barkers; the mournful echo of the band in the distance; nearer at hand, the shouts and applause excited

by the performance of some marvelous feat before the thousands in the grand stand; and, very close, the grunting of the inmates of the piggeries off to their left at the top of the slope mingling with the fretful bleatings from the sheepfolds directly behind them.

A freight train rumbled by on the tracks below, and a brakeman, standing with spread feet on the top of a cattle car, waved at them sociably.

"Dinner's ready, Sam. I hope you'll like the stuffing in the san'wiches. It's a new one."

"I could eat anything, I'm so all-fired hungry," said Barnes, sitting up and looking at his watch, which was tied to his belt with a leathern thong. "It's after two o'clock, so no wonder. Is this all you got to eat?"

"Yes. Don't you think it will be enough? I thought I was bringing too much. Why, here's a whole fried chicken, a loaf of bread made into san'wiches, a big pat of cottage cheese, sweet pickles, potato chips, cookies, hard-boiled eggs, some of our best peaches, and a bottle of sas'parilla, Sam."

Barnes began without further comment, his head turned to catch every bleat from the fold.

Emma took the smallest sandwich and the shortest pickle, and resolved not to touch more than a wing of the chicken.

Sam, with his usual young farmer's



She spread a small tablecloth on the ground, very slowly and carefully, her sunburned hat tipped low to hide the disappointment in her eyes.

all-devouring appetite, swept away three-fourths of the meal, not noticing that his wife was eating very little. Each time, after turning to glance toward the fold, he failed to face around squarely again, until finally Emma could see only the sharp profile of his face and his angular young back.

He did not speak to her during the meal, and she knew that he did not notice the lack of conversation from her. He was wholly engrossed in thoughts of his sheep. She suddenly felt her eyes sting and her best white bread turn to ashes in her mouth.

A few faint, plaintive notes from the silver cornet in His Majesty's Irish Guards' Band searched out her heart.

There was a series of sharp reports from the direction of the grand stand, and presently there floated overhead a stream of runaway daylight fireworks, hollow silk Japanese boys and girls, cows, camels, and monstrous birds. One staggered, collapsed, and fell to earth. There was a chorus of shrill squeals from some farmer's children, as they rushed to retrieve it.

Emma glanced at Sam. His eyes were following the things unseeingly.

He was still thinking of the sheep, or of the pasture land he would buy if he won first-prize money, or of the farm—anything but of her. He never had time to talk to her any more, and it had been an aching age since he had told her that he loved her.

She put her chin down on her knees and tucked her scuffed shoes under the faded pink poppies of her old-fashioned organdie dress. Then she turned her shadowy hazel eyes upon her husband and for the first time in her life looked at him without rose-colored spectacles.

Could she really be married to this man? She said his name to herself—Sam Elmer Barnes—as if it were entirely new to her.

"I'm Emma Barnes now; I'm his wife; I belong to him, just as the farm does—no, more than that until he gets it paid for. Maybe that's why he does not pay any attention to me—I belong to him. But he's not mine—he doesn't love me any more—he's rude!"

He had been rude that morning when she had said something apologetic about her old gown and shabby shoes and sun-blistered hat, thrice absurd with the absurdity of an imbecile style long out of date. She had not meant to complain, and it hurt to think that he had been too blind or too indifferent to see what she had meant.

Yes, Sam was dull about some things, knew that he was dull, and did not care a jot. She hotly called him so in her sore mind, and read bigotry in every angle of his face and every line of the arrowlike back that not even the plow could bend.

How like him to sit there and eat all the dinner, never troubling to see whether she had sufficient or not, taking it for granted that she would see to that herself! Sam took too much for granted. He took it for granted that she would always love him, simply because, in the past, she had told him that she did love him; and she wondered

now whether, if she should tell him the opposite, he would be very much disturbed—particularly if the sheep and the farm should remain to him.

He took it for granted, because she did not complain, that she liked the utter loneliness of her days on the farm when he was afield; that she was content never to have had a new gown since she had been married three years before; that because she never asked him to help her carry water from the well or to gather kindling in the bush, she never wished or needed help.

Because she did not stop her ears and scream that she could endure no more of it, he never dreamed but what she liked sheep, wool, and the excellences of the much-desired pasture for steady conversational diet, even as he did.

He took it for granted that she had either become used to his little crudities of manner, or grown to like them since the time when she had once timidly criticized them, for he had kept them, every one.

And here, in and part of the wonderful Toronto Exhibition, he could sit and stare at the daylight fireworks and not see them; hear the multitudinous, fascinating noises of the fair and be unmoved by them; know that she had been looking forward to this excursion with eager longing for months, and yet refuse to leave the sheep and the team to go where the finest band in the empire was playing for all who would to hear.

Were the piggery and the fold and a few tents near by, where no one came but stockmen and farmers, all she was to see of the exhibition? Were all the music and the strange exhibits, the midway, the races, and the vaudeville performance before the grand stand not for her? Emma's heart swelled with sudden anger. What right had he to disregard her desires so entirely?

Sam shied his last peach pit at a

blackbird and stretched himself on the grass again.

"I wish I had a bag of peanuts. Darned if I don't!"

Emma shook the tablecloth and folded it.

"Can't you eat these last two cookies?"

"No. There's too much vanilla in 'em. You always get it too strong. What I want is some of that fine bunch of peanuts up there by the red tent." He yawned and shaded his eyes. It was evident that he had no intention of going for them himself.

There was a short pause.

"If you will give me the money, Sam, I'll go and get a bag for you," said Emma, trying to keep the acid in her heart from tincturing her tone.

Sam fished out a dime. "See if you can make him give you three bags for this, Em."

Em had once just escaped being run down by an engine, and she had the same feeling of dazed relief as she climbed the slope. She had been so terribly close to an outburst that she did not know what had kept her from emptying all her scorn, all her disappointment, all the overwrought, insane promptings of her nerves upon that bundle of blind selfishness that was her husband.

"I mustn't get sour and be a nag," she thought. "It won't do any good to be disagreeable. If he can't see—the blind bat!—there's no good telling him."

It was Emma's way to try to look things in the face. She despised people who were sorry for themselves, and it did not make it any easier for her to realize that now she herself was one of those people. In her whirling brain one thought stood out. Everything was almost, if not all, her own fault. She had spoiled Sam, spoiled him from the first. She had wanted to show him how capable and self-reliant she could be, and

she had overdone it. She had wanted to prove to him that in all things, great and small, he came first; and she had overdone it. It must make a man selfish to serve him too well, to give in and give up and go without too many times and too gladly. In avoiding the fault of selfishness, had she thrust it upon Sam? Emma wondered miserably if, after all, she had been too selfish of unselfishness.

Why couldn't he have said that she was a brave girl to help him save money by wearing her old things to the exhibition? Why couldn't he have helped her into the wagon, instead of letting her scramble in as best she might alone? Why couldn't he have said something nice about the picnic dinner, and have paid a boy ten cents to look after the team while he took her to hear the band? Why couldn't he have gone for the peanuts himself and let her rest?

But, then, how was he to know that she was tired unless she told him so? Wasn't he absolutely blind? How many times had she been ready to faint with weariness and still he had let her work on and had sometimes even criticized her for not accomplishing more? Wasn't she a fool not to tell him better? Whose fault was it if not hers?

Still, he ought to see it for himself. Who likes to be grumbling and demanding consideration? Who wants it if it has to be asked for? Well, then, why cry over a hurt if one will refuse the obvious remedy?

As Emma reached the red tent and waited her turn to be served, she came to a conclusion. She had been mistaken in Sam. This disagreeable feeling in her heart, which had been seething there for days, was merely disappointment. Since she refused to point out his shortcomings to him—first because she could not bring herself to do it, and second because she knew Sam would never see them—only two courses remained—to put up with him and get what happiness



Sam accumulated a load of free samples and trashy souvenirs of every description.

there was to be had in life in spite of everything, or to call it an entire failure and leave him!

Absently she proffered the dime and received one bag of peanuts and five coppers in change.

Sam accepted the peanuts and the change without a word. He looked at her sharply as she sat down beside him again and fanned her hot face with her hat. He offered her the bag once, but she shook her head, so he ate them all

with his head turned, as before, toward the fold.

After a while he stood up.

"Come on, Em!" He picked up his hat, put it on carelessly, and swung his coat over his shoulder. Then he started up the slope.

"You're forgetting the basket, Sam."

"You bring it, Em. I got my coat to carry."

She picked it up and followed him through the gap in the wire, across the

lane, and past the piggery, to where they had left their team. She put the basket under the wagon seat and was pulling her skirts aside to climb in when Sam's voice stopped her.

"Well, aren't you coming along, Em?"

"Where?" she asked, with a quick note of hope.

"What'd we drive thirty miles for—to sit in wagons? Come along with you! We're going to see the sights." He led off, with his swinging, ground-covering stride, and Emma had to run to catch up with him.

At the sheepfold, he must needs stop for a moment to gaze at the six fine specimens he had entered for the prize. Emma could not look at their stupid faces or hear their senseless bleating without disgust. She had seen and heard too much of sheep of late.

"I ought to get first prize with them, Em. They're the best in the lot. First ribbon and five hundred dollars would be pretty nice to win."

"Yes, I know." She laid her hand on his arm, but he did not seem to notice it, and let it slide off as they started on. "I know, and I hope you will win, Sam, but you mustn't set your heart on it. If you are disappointed——"

"If I am," said he, a little impatiently, "then I'm out the ribbon and the money and all the advertising a prize would give my flock, and Macpherson or Saunderson or somebody else will be in; that's all. Shall we cut across here to the midway, or go on over to the buildings?"

"Let's go right on to the band stand. I'm dying to hear the Irish Guards."

"Come on! We're going to the midway. You'll hear music enough to do you there."

They went to the midway, and the thought that had come to Emma at the red tent flashed back and went with her wherever Sam took her.

From the noisy midway—which Sam seemed to enjoy prodigiously, but which

Emma found rather horrifying—they went past the rear of the great grand stand, listened to the shouts of the crowd swarming over it, and hurried on to the buildings given over to exhibits, Sam accumulating a load of free samples and trashy souvenirs of every description. Emma thought them exceedingly vulgar, and longed to sweep the senseless things out of his hands into the gutter, but because it was a pleasure for him apparently, she forbore and helped him carry them.

Everything at which Emma longed to linger Sam had no time for, and the places where he would fain stop indefinitely were dull for her. He kept looking at clocks and stopping to compare them with his watch.

"Got to be back at the fold by five," he would say, and then rush off through the crowds, leaving her to follow as best she might.

At last they came to the art building. Emma ventured a special request:

"Sam, I want to see the paintings. The paper says nobody ought to miss 'em. Let's go in—please!"

For answer he mounted the steps. At the door they were brought up short by a stern, one-at-a-time turnstile. "Get your tickets at the booth to your right!" sang the gatekeeper, in weary singsong.

"Nothing doing!" said Sam with decision, and, taking hold of Emma's elbow, he guided her firmly down the stairs and into the thickest of the crowd on the sidewalk. "Pay ten cents to get in to see a lot of daubs? Not much! We'll steer across here to the process building, Em. That'll be worth seeing."

Emma could not trust herself to speak, but in the rattle and roar of the carpet loom on exhibition she found a little relief. It seemed less likely that the mutinous trumpeting of her heart and head could make itself heard over this din.

Outside again, they bought hot wiener sandwiches and coffee, and then

they made all speed back to the sheep-fold.

It was roofed by a big white tent and inclosed by a fence, over which hung a fringe of onlookers; for the sides of the tent had been rolled up, and the yellow radiance of the waning sun shone softly over everything, turning the fleeces of the sheep to gold.

Sam and Emma found a space and leaned over the fence with the rest, but presently Sam vaulted over it and was busy helping the men inside to get the candidates for honors lined up in a judgable row. There was a great deal of baaing and stupid milling about in the deep, clean sawdust, much placing and replacing among the owners, and good-natured comments and amateur judging in undertones from the onlookers.

Presently all the owners left the inclosure except Sam and Macpherson, who remained as assistants to the judges.

Macpherson was sandy, stooped, rat-eyed, old. He had been three times left a widower, and as Emma looked from him to Sam, she wondered if the soil would, in time, do to Sam what it seemed to have done to Macpherson, and if he, too, would be three times a widower.

She dared not trifle with that bit of madness, and looked for sanity to the little judge. He was dressed in decent black, with an old-fashioned watch chain looped across his waistcoat, a chain with a cherry stone carved into a basket for a charm. Years of Ontario farming had turned his mild old face to the color of corned beef. He had pale-blue eyes, and as they rested for an instant on hers, Emma felt better.

She watched the deliberate, impartial manner with which he went over the sheep. How gently and yet firmly he pressed his hands on their backs, how honestly he considered each point in every one, how he judged their size,

their kind, their wool, soberly and competently and, above all, somehow kindly!

Emma felt her spirits rise; the world could not be such an unsatisfactory place if men like that were in it. Perhaps Sam only needed time to get to be like this man. She hoped he would not turn out as fat and pompous and painfully conscientious as the German in overalls who was the other judge. Goodness was well, yes, but goodness and stupidity—that must be as hard to bear as selfishness.

Just then she felt a hand on her arm and turned around. It was Mabel Missal, who had been raised in the country, but who now lived in Toronto and gave herself city airs.

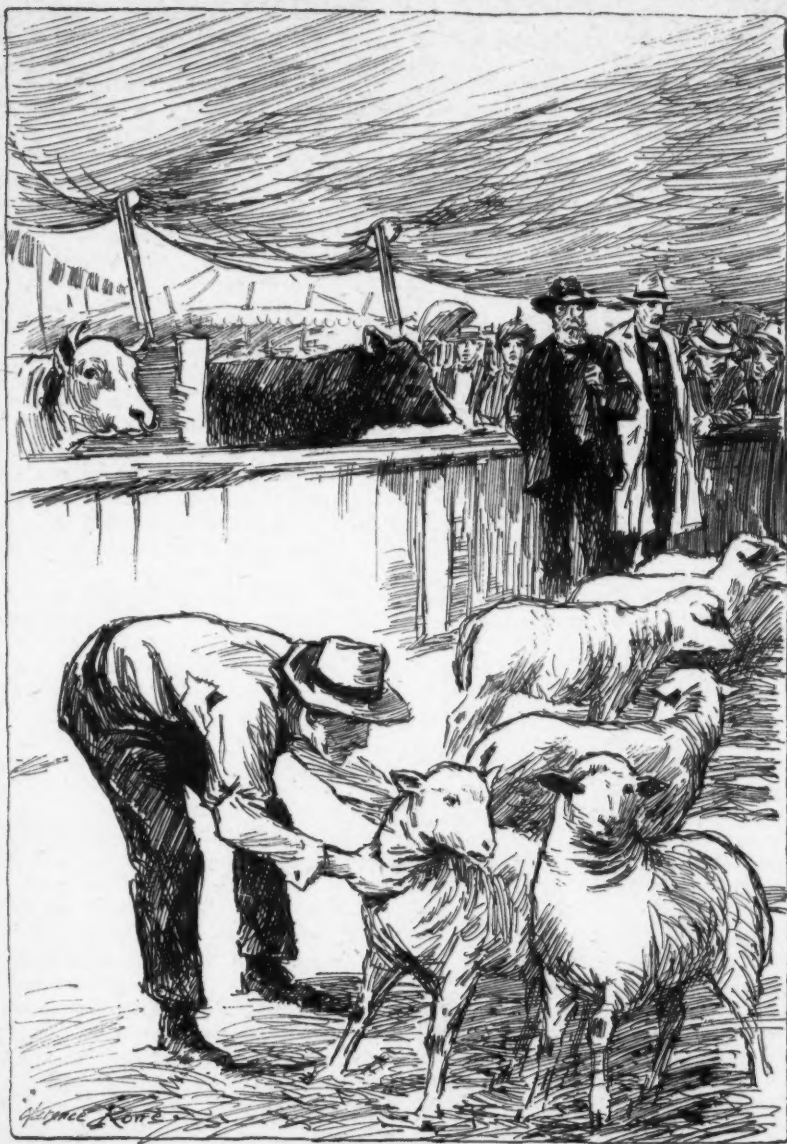
She greeted Emma effusively at first, and then, aided and encouraged by her husband, who was of the flashy-clerk class, she began to patronize her. Mabel was dressed in the height of the last scandalous fashion, cheaply copied, her voice was sharp and her face rather hard. She had a great deal to say about "T'rontah" as being superior to all the rest of the created world, and the advantages of city life over existence in the country, while her husband put in bits of recent slang as he thought of them, and smoked a vilely poor cigarette.

Mabel eyed Emma's dress and hat and pile of souvenirs with plain scorn. Emma felt sure she was thinking that her friend's shabbiness proved that she had made a mistake in her marriage. Presently she asked:

"Where's your hubby? You know I never met him."

"That's Mr. Barnes right over there—holding the two end sheep."

Sam certainly did not cut a very impressive figure just then. His cheap clothes were dusty, and he was bent almost double over the sheep, which were behaving so badly that he was moved to wrathful mouthing of strong words.



His hat was shoved far back, and his hair was tousled and wet with his exertions. He had taken off his coat, and the patch on his shirt under his arm was pulling itself loose.

Mabel looked at him and giggled and glanced at her own dapper lord.

"Oh, is that him?" said she, and looked on Mrs. Barnes half pityingly and half contemptuously. "Good-by, hayseed. If we ever get as far into the bush as your place, we'll drop in on you."

Emma looked after them with varied feelings. She sensed their vulgarity and knew that since Missal was only a clerk and Mabel very extravagant, they must be far from the prosperity they appeared to own on the surface. She knew that they really had nothing, and yet city life looked alluring, even as typified by them. But she loyally believed that, if things had been reversed, Missal would have looked very much worse, holding those sheep in Sam's place, than Sam did. She noticed, with a pang of envy, how politely Mabel's husband was helping her along the lane, and recalled how he had called his wife "sugar baby" every time he had spoken to her.

After what seemed endless delay, the prizes were awarded. First prize went to Macpherson, second to Saunderson, third to Sam. Emma could have wept aloud. All that those woolly idiots had cost her, and then to bring only third prize! She wished Sam would come to her, so that she could tell him how sorry she was, but he walked to the other side of the fold to talk to some men, and she did not catch the one glance he threw in her direction. Emma sent a boy to tell him that she would wait for him in the women's tent, and went toward it dejectedly.

There she sat on a heap of straw and listened to the howls of the children of other farmers' wives, sat and thought and wondered at life, and waited until

dark for Sam to come to get her. She thought that he would be sure to take it for granted that she would go to the team at dusk, and she vowed furiously that she would wait for him to come for her, for once, if she waited until she was gray.

In any other mood she would have gone and hitched up the team to give her nervous fingers something to do, but now she sat still upon the hay and waited, listening to the grunts of pigs, the bleating of sheep, and the champing of horses, listening to the wailings of babies, the scolding of mothers, the cries of the peanut and sandwich venders, and the steady roar, roar, roar from the midway blending into the more muffled roar of Toronto itself, hurrying home for supper. A breeze fresh from the lake fanned in upon her and made the gasoline lamp flare.

"Come along, Em!" said Sam from the door.

She sprang up and joined him.

"Oh, Sam, I—I'm so sorry you didn't win first, but third is better than——"

He interrupted to call a passing coffee vender and buy coffee. A man with a basketful of roast-beef sandwiches ran up.

"How many can you eat, Em? This and the coffee is all we'll get until we get home. Got to hustle, too."

They finished the sandwiches on the way to their wagon. A glance at its empty back made her exclaim:

"Why, Sam! Where are the sheep? Are you going to ship them home?"

"Hop in," said Sam, "and don't worry about the sheep. We've got four cows to milk when we get home, and thirty miles to drive—remember that."

Emma pinned her hat tight and put on her gloves, maintaining the strictest silence while Sam picked his way out of the grounds and through the crush of traffic near it to Dufferin Street, then to Dundas, and along Dundas well into the old road. Sam said never a word,

either, until Toronto lay well behind them. Then he made her put on her jacket, and they drove for another mile in silence.

The moon had risen, the world was beautiful beneath it, and Emma, fully resolved now no longer to depend upon Sam for her happiness, was trying to soothe her weary spirit with the beauty before her eyes.

But it was very hard. She had loved him so much. To find him rude, callous, and selfish was a dreadful thing. She felt as if she had poured out all the riches of her heart upon stones.

The road stretched ahead a clear yellow swath between the dark fields. The frogs and the crickets sang their peaceful song; the scent of hay rose ahead; the moon and myriad stars shone aloft. They topped a little rise, and the horses settled down to the contented, even gait that would bring them all home speedily, their hoofs beating a muffled song in the road.

Emma fitted words to it: "He isn't a god; he isn't a god; he isn't a god! You did it yourself; you did it yourself; you did it yourself!"

"Well, Em, don't you want to hear how I came out on the sheep deal?"

Emma fought and conquered the devil that prompted her to snap at him before she answered:

"If you don't know the answer to that question, Sam, there's no use my answering it."

He laughed, a pleased, chuckling little sound. Then he put his arm around her and drew her to him.

"Well, Em, our sheep may have only won third prize, but they every one of them sold to Hennessey for a mighty good price, and now we won't have to stint ourselves the way we did the last quarter for our payment on the farm. I've got orders for six pairs more, too, and Hennessey says we've got the right stock and to go right on breeding them. That fellow knows a good thing when

he sees it. Why, Em, there's a fortune in sheep like them! Next year they will take first prize—see if they don't! When Hennessey heard me say that they were for sale, he passed up the prize winners and just grabbed them. Wasn't that a feather in my cap, eh?"

"I'm awfully glad you did so well. What would you have done if you had won the first prize?"

"I wish I had won it! Gosh, I just prayed that five hundred would fall to me, Em. I'd have taken you for a trip to Montreal! I've been thinking for months about it—how we'd first go down to Toronto, and how I'd buy you some nice things to wear, and——"

"Oh, Sam! Have you? Really, have you?"

"Em, that's only one of the things I've been thinking of. That's why I have been thinking, eating, and sleeping sheep. That's why I'm wearing a patched shirt and you're wearing old things that might have come out of the ark! I want to get on, damn it! I'm tired of seeing you having nothing and going nowhere. You've got a change coming to you, Em; you got it coming! You're the best little woman on this planet. You never kick, never frown, never ask fool questions to bother a fellow into insanity. You'll work like a nailer and smile, darn it, and you've never yapped at me yet! Why, to-day you had a rotten day—oh, I know you did! And after looking forward to the ex for over a year, too! But you just seem to know how things are, and you take them as they come. You help me lots, Em; more than you know, my shabby little thoroughbred!" His voice broke, and he held her in a suffocating embrace.

"I saw that fellow Missal and his wife talking to you at the fold, the braying donkeys! You look better in your rags than his wife ever will if he

covers her with diamonds. I saw them just ahead of us in that crowd going into the picture gallery. That's why I right-about-faced so quick. I didn't want them to sneer at us if I could help it, but they found you in spite of me."

"But why didn't you tell me that, Sam? I didn't see them."

"I know you didn't, but I knew that you would think that I had a good reason, as you always do. Oh, Em, you're the most understandingest woman alive!"

"Things are beginning to come our way at last. I can just feel it. Just wait a little longer, Em, and you'll see what you will see. That poor fool counter jumper and his wife will see some real style then. I'll build you a new house, just the sort you want, plumbing and all—no more carrying water for you. You're going to have pictures of your own, and books, and every year I'll take you somewhere. I never meant to keep you prisoner in the bush as long as I have, but things come slow to a man without capital—money capital, I

mean. You're the game little girl that puts heart in me. I'll win, and I'll win big, too, and it'll be all because of you and all for you."

He turned her face up to him and kissed her.

"Tears! Why, Em!"

"Yes, tears, because I'm so far from being what you think I am, Sam. Because I'm so happy and—and—and— Because ever since you began to get ready for the exhibition, you haven't told me that you loved me once. Even now you haven't really said it, dear."

"Lord Almighty!" howled Sam Barnes. "Don't you know I love you? Ain't I living for you? Ain't every breath I draw for you? Ain't——"

She wound her arms around his neck. "Yes, but all that is like salt water to a thirsty man unless you tell me, and tell me often. Tell me now, Sam; I like to hear it."

So he told her, and it was then that he realized what illogical beings are women, even the most understanding of them.

The Awakening Avenue

THE avenue's changed in a night, without warning;

Green—two soft lines of it—blurs to a mist

Far up the way, while at house fronts this morning

Purple-veined cups have pushed up where they list.

Black boughs, snow-rimmed, have put off their half mourning,

Dressed them in color, sun-covered and kissed.

Horses go brisker, with flanks all a-gleaming;

Chatter the mowers on grassplots again.

(Sound of the spring to set hearts all a-dreaming!)

Stay! Is that lilac, new-born of the rain?

Nay, it is early to gasp for that fragrance,

But her sweets and her purple rise quick in her vein.

World, you have shamed me. I, whose lips tremble,

I must reclothe my sad heart in array

Fit for this scene where new tulips assemble

Butterflies, dipping, then crinkling away.

Soul, like the trees, thou shalt doff thy half mourning,

Put on spring's colors and honor to-day!

RHEEM DOUGLAS.



A CRADLE SINGER

by Frances E. Gale

Author of "Across the Sea," "Pemberton's Decision," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY MAYO BUNKER

I AM not certain when the knowledge first came to me that my voice was not my own, but my mother's—that the artist in me *was* my mother, not myself—but the moment of conscious realization stands out in my memory like a jagged point of rock jutting over a heaving sea. On that point I stood, suddenly and dizzily aware that beneath lay strange, unfathomed depths, hiding terrifying things, and that very soon I would be compelled by the Will that had always been the spring of my actions to leap into the shifting, treacherous element and seek to emulate swimmers whose strength far surpassed my own.

The moment came as I stood upon the little stage at the head of Signor Bertini's studio in London, and reached the transcendent climax in the "Love-Death Song" of Isolde.

The maestro sat at the piano a little behind me. At my right a long mirror—the bitter foe of most students, the dearest friend of a few—reflected my face, pale, young, gray-eyed, set in a frame of heavy-falling yellow hair—my pose as I swayed forward toward the great room into which the evening shadows were beginning to creep.

Before me the long studio lay, delightful in its rich blend of colors; rugs of soft, deep tones, with here and there the skin of some tawny or striped beast;

rare bits of pottery showing dim blue from this recess, splashing dull red from that; busts of the composers, whitely gleaming, frankly dominated by a life-size head of the maestro himself, the work, as he was careful to inform prospective pupils, of the famous sculptor whose daughter's voice had developed under the maestro's training from a gusty organ of uncertain compass into a very stream of gold, artistically and materially. From the arched ceiling of dark wood swung, censerlike, small, dull-blue lamps. Upon the walls hung portraits of stars then glittering in the operatic firmament to whom the signor had proved a faithful guide into paths of fame.

Along either side of the studio, the class had ranged itself to hear my lesson; the vivid, hollow-eyed girl whose tendency to weak lungs made a pitiful farce of her determined effort to cultivate a voice that with good health might have made her fortune; the young husband and wife, tenor and contralto, who turned from the singer to exchange glances of criticism or approval; the broad-shouldered basso who was to make his debut at Bechstein Hall that night and who vainly strove to appear engrossed in my work while his fingers fluttered nervously the pages of the song he had just rehearsed for the last time;

the silken-hosed, diamond-bedecked lady whose chauffeur waited at the corner of the square and whose cheek still burned from the rating the maestro had seen fit to deal out to her recent vocal efforts.

Ten or twelve there were, but my eyes, passing over them all, sought at the far end of the studio other eyes, dark, luminous, compelling. My mother sat upon a couch facing me, and as I caught and held that long, passionate note, her slight, dark-robed figure swayed toward me as mine toward her, her lips parted, her eyes shone, and I knew that the voice issuing from my lips was my mother's voice, that my throat was but an instrument through which her soul uttered itself, and that the Will that had impelled me so far upon my musical career was not my own, but hers.

*"ertrinken—
versinken—
unbewusst—
höchste Lust!"*

So fused was my identity with hers that, as the last notes of the song fell from my lips, I staggered, as might a half-awakened sleep walker, not realizing that the maestro's "Bravo! Bravo! Good! Very good!" was addressed to me.

It was the first commendatory word he had uttered that day. His mood had been black, each student quivering under his wrath or his satire. In stepping to the platform, I had felt something unusual in his attitude toward myself, always a favorite, though frequently a fiercely assailed pupil.

"Sing this!" he had commanded, flinging the Wagner score upon the piano rack. "And remember that you are not Ellen Fairfax from America. You are Isolde, whose blood is Irish, whose dead lover lies in her arms, whose heart is broken. Sing, not with your voice alone, but with your soul. You are a woman—not a child. You blaze

with passion. You die with longing. You welcome death that restores you to him you love. Now sing!"

And with his southern urge firing my quiet New England blood, with those eyes from the far end of the room leaping the space between them and mine, I had sung. And my song projected me into a new world, a world wherein I trembled at the shapes I saw, knowing I was not of them.

Heedless of the pupils still awaiting their lessons and grumblingly conscious of the approaching dinner hour, Signor Bertini dashed past me and down the long room to where my mother sat, and in low-voiced, but gesticulatory, monologue addressed her. As he talked, her expressive face lighted and glowed, and she presently looked toward me with a pride that warmed again my fast-cooling blood. I had satisfied them, then, at last. But what new thing had they in store for me?

The maestro sat down upon the couch, careless of the curious or resentful glances of the neglected class, and, with crooked finger and back-flung head, beckoned me down the room. I obeyed, standing before them as might a child, the echo of my own song still in my ears, but my lips mute. It was amazing how so dumb a girl as I could have so great a voice!

My mother took my hand, and the maestro spoke to me, his great black eyes flashing, his lips wreathed in his most charming smile, but he laid his hand upon my mother's arm.

"Do you know what you are going to be, Signorina Ellen? You are going to be a prima donna. You are going to be *Elsa*. You are going to be *Marguerite*. Yes, you are going to be *Isolde*. Your portrait will hang upon these walls with those of my most distinguished ones. I, Bertini, say it, and my pupils, who sing before every court in Europe, know that what I prophesy comes true. Is it not so, madame?"



"Ellen," my mother said, "Signor Bertini thinks that your voice is fitted for grand-opera work, and he is able to secure a hearing for you before a great impresario. Instead of the recital we have been planning for you in December, he can give you two numbers on the program of the concert at Queen's Hall on the tenth. Sir Arthur Weyling is an old friend of the signor's. He will be in London that night and will hear you sing, and the maestro thinks——"

"Thinks!" cried the Italian. "He knows! That is if Mees Fairfax will forget that she is Mees Fairfax, and be *Isolde* as she was just now. The 'Love-Death Song'—that is what you shall sing. And for an encore—oh, you will receive an encore!—that Woodman-trifle, 'The Birthday'—it will be perfect. Then for your second number it shall be the 'Jewel Song.' That calls not for such passion, but it shows the quality of your upper notes. But we must work, madame; we must work. It is an opportunity that comes but once."

He had turned to my mother again, and she to him, their faces glowing, his hand still pressed upon her arm. Then he leaped to his feet.

"Ah, tell her about it as you return home, madame. She has all things—all things but one—voice, beauty, physique, the patience for study, the intelligence—all things but the temperament. Ah, madame, had she but your temperament, the world would be hers! But you American women are wonderful. We think you dead sometimes when you are but asleep. And often you sleep late. But when you awake, you are all alive. We must find means of awaking her, madame. She is stirring now. Her song to-night told us so. But she must awake fully, and soon. Addio! I must go drill Mademoiselle Marie in her lullaby for to-morrow night. Ah, what it is to have so many pupils making début at one

time! *She* may dream if she will. She is but a singer of cradle songs. But for you, signorina, it is to awake. Awake!"

He sped up the room, waving a mandatory hand in the direction of a small, dark girl whose velvet notes stole after us as we left the studio, crossed the high-walled inclosure, and found ourselves in High Street, Kensington.

"Drive slowly," my mother instructed as we entered a taxi, and with hands that were beginning to shake, I opened and rearranged my music roll before I said:

"What is all this about, mother?"

She put her hand in my lap, clasping my trembling fingers, her eyes shining softly in the dusk of the closed vehicle.

"Ellen," she said, "it is as he told you. Madame Vallini will not be able to sing on the tenth, and Bertini was asked to find a substitute. It so happens that Weyling, who has been producing with such success in Berlin, will be in London that night. Bertini has so much confidence in your voice that he is going to have you sing in Vallini's place, and Sir Arthur will be there to hear you. Sir Arthur is looking for another soprano, and Bertini believes you have every requisite for grand-opera rôles—every requisite but one, and of that we both saw the awakening in your song to-night. Ellen, you would not be my daughter if you could not feel what you sing. You felt that song to-night."

But I had not felt it. It was she who had felt it, and in some mysterious way had momentarily communicated *Isolde's* rapture of agony to me. I sat silent, watching through the window the swift-moving panorama of Piccadilly.

"Ellen," my mother went on, "I want to tell you what this means to me. You know that I had a voice—useless now. When I was your age, that voice was my greatest joy, my bitterest sorrow. I had a little training, just enough to

begin to realize my powers, when, from being well-to-do people, we became desperately poor. To my father my music was merely an expensive and useless accomplishment, impossible for a poor man's daughter. We removed to the country. I had nothing to keep my ambition alive; yet it lived, devouring itself, gnawing upon my heart. I read about the early lives of great singers and the doors that magically opened for them, but no such doors opened for me. I was caged hopelessly.

"Then I married your father, not knowing that marriage rivets the bars that always surround a woman. He was poor, too, but he took me North, where his mother's people lived, I secretly dreaming that I might somehow find opportunity for the development of my talent. But your father was engrossed in his efforts to get on, and his people would have thought me mad if I had talked of spending money for instruction. He worked eighteen hours out of the twenty-four, and he expected me to keep pace with him. He was splendid, I know, and he was kind; but his own ambition to be a successful business man seemed to him all sufficient for us both.

"Then the children came—the two boys—and both of them were sickly and needed constant care. I worked for them all, knowing always that there was within me Something Else, more precious and more really I than was the creature who baked and sewed and rocked the cradle, and that that Something was being slowly crushed and starved to death.

"When I laid my second boy in his coffin, I sang beside it. People thought it strange that I could do so. They did not know that a singer's tears are song. I believed that it would be the last time I would raise my voice, and then, a few months later, you came. You filled my hungry heart. You were so gentle and so docile that you left

me time to dream new dreams; and then, when you were but three years old, you trilled out a little song in imitation of a wild bird outside the window, a song that told me my poor, dead gift had been reborn in you.

"I had always worked conscientiously to help your father prosper, but from then on I had a double purpose. I was determined you should have every opportunity that I had missed, and by the time you were old enough to begin your studies, we were able to give you the best training within reach. Your father understands no more than did my father, but he felt that with my only remaining child I was entitled to have my way. Besides, he could not have stopped me. I was stronger for you than I had ever been for myself. When we came abroad, it was at a sacrifice for him, I know. He has been alone now more than a year, and he misses his home life. But there have been sacrifices made before of which he knew nothing. Of that sort there shall be no more.

"I had no thought of your being more than a concert singer. That was the highest flight my own young dreams ever made. But to interpret a great rôle, to be the very soul the song expresses! Ellen, I can scarcely believe it true! Yet Bertini says you have every chance of success; that to stop short of that would be a crime against your voice; and that if you sing before Weyling as you sang to-night, there is every prospect that you may immediately enter upon training for the operatic stage.

"I do not know what your father will say. He thinks home the only place for women. But you are my child; your talent is mine; we have lived and worked for this day, and it shall be ours. Ellen, you are crying. You are overdone. My dear! My child!"

Yes, I was crying. The tears fell fast upon my hand and hers, and I

could answer nothing. For, except for my silver voice, which was my mother's as much as were her hands and feet, I was my father's daughter.

The cab turned into Russell Square. We entered our hotel and took from the hall rack the letters that awaited us. In our sitting room, my mother opened the envelope addressed by my father's hand and exclaimed:

"Why, he will be here to-morrow, possibly to-night! This letter has been delayed. They sailed on the *Teutonic*, due to-day. He says they're coming over to bring us home, now that your year is up. What will he say when we tell him that you are but beginning?"

"They?" I repeated breathlessly. "Who is with him?"

"Tom Carnaby," my mother answered.

II.

"And so this is your London," Tom said. "And this, I suppose, is the atmosphere of art. Pretty thick, isn't it?"

When he said that, we were sitting in the second row of the balcony of Queen's Hall on the evening following that on which Bertini had said that I was to sing before. Weyling in the same auditorium. Father and Tom had arrived in the morning, and as mother and I had our seats engaged for this, the last of the summer promenade concerts, we all went together. Mother and I generally sat in the balcony, because we could hear better and we liked to see the house.

There was a challenge in Tom's tone, but it was so nice and comforting to sit there with my hand in father's on one side and my sleeve touching Tom's broad shoulder upon the other that I did not rise to it as a girl with proper pride should have done.

"Don't you want to smoke, too?" I asked. "I'm used to it, and in this artistic atmosphere one cigarette more

or less will be of no account. There's a big pipe directly behind you."

In spite of the blue haze through which we saw it, the picture spread below was one to charm even the least bohemian spirit—the graceful, plummy palms banked high before the great organ; the glisten of jewels, white shoulders, and silken stuffs in the tiers of seats behind and at the sides of the orchestra; the semicircle of musicians in the center of the hall, with their gleaming instruments; the slim, black figure of the conductor in his little brass stall rhythmically waving his baton; the sluggishly shifting mass of standing listeners in the open space behind him; the crimson-shaded chandeliers making huge splashes of living color against the green background and over the various groups.

A quartet of young women trailed clinging, filmy gowns upon the platform, making, as with arms intertwined they swayed in time to the barcarolle they sang, a shimmering line of pale yellow and blue.

Tom did not take advantage of my permission to smoke. He has old-fashioned—some people would call them bourgeois—ideas regarding the courtesies due to women. As the four girls perfunctorily left the stage before responding to the expected encore, he said:

"I suppose this singing master of yours is quite to be trusted? I've heard that some of these fellows string Americans along, telling them they are bound to succeed in opera, until they get all their money for lessons, and then their promises prove to be bubbles."

"That sometimes happens," I admitted.

We sat in silence until the encore was concluded. Then Tom asked, nodding toward the retreating figures of the singers:

"Does that sort of life really appeal to you, Ellen?"

I thought a moment, then I said:

"It appeals to part of me."

"More than a life of home and family?"

"Would not both be possible, Tom?" I asked gently.

My heart beat hard as I waited his reply. It was a long time in coming. Then——

"I think not," he said, and the opening chords of the symphony silenced us.

My mind was too busy to note the music during the long number, but at its close Bertini's pupil, Marie Constant, came before the audience. Her nervousness was apparent, painfully so to me who had heard her frequent recitation of this song. That she should appear even at a summer concert in so notable a hall was due to the maestro's influence in the musical world of London. She faced us, a little, white-robed figure, pathetically small and solitary, and I felt my own throat contract and my mouth grow dry as her voice wavered and almost broke during the first verse. But my panic was not for her. I knew that this appearance was the crowning achievement of her years of study, that no permanent public career was open to her or expected of her. It was myself I saw, two weeks hence, standing upon the same stage in competition with well-known artists, taking part in the first concert of the regular season, singing not only to a large and critical audience, but to one critic upon whose judgment might depend my whole future. I shivered in anticipation.

Yet, as I sat there between father and Tom, the three years of study at home, the one feverish year over here, the picture that had been held constantly before my eyes of public appreciation, public success, faded, and a very different picture emerged, looking upon which I knew that my fear was not of failure, but of success.

Mademoiselle Constant was doing better in her second verse, and in the

final one her sweet contralto took on the brooding, mother note that Bertini had been at such pains to instill into her imagination and train into her execution. The lullaby ended, and the singer received a fair meed of applause, the audience good-naturedly overlooking the threatened breakdown in appreciation of the better work later on. As the last note died away, Tom leaned back in his chair with a long breath.

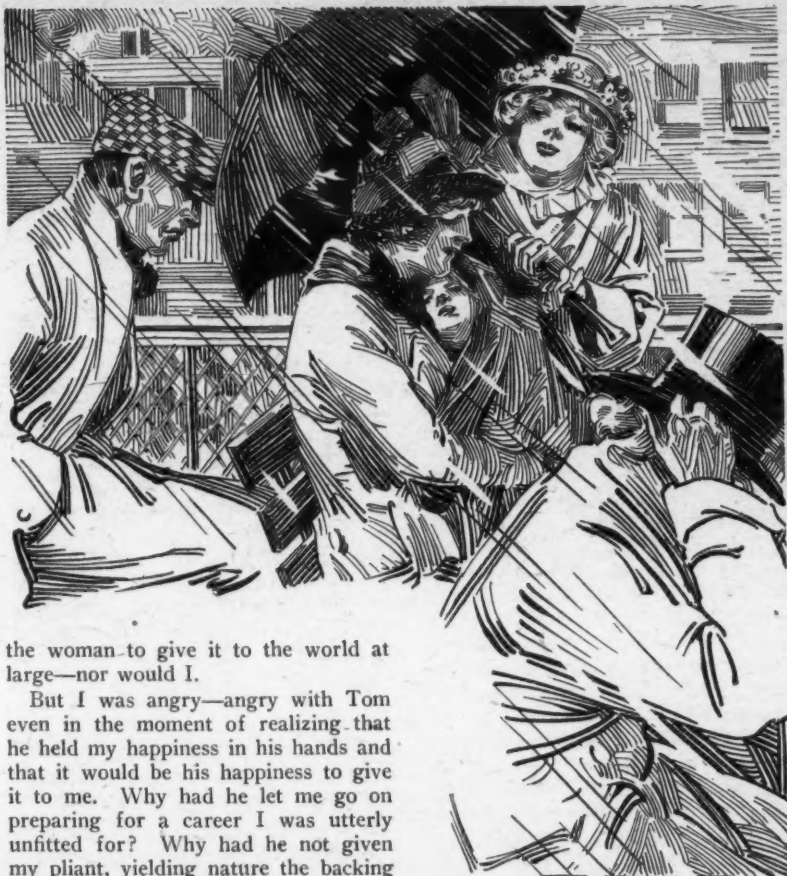
"Ah, that was singing!" he said.

I looked at him, astonished. When had Tom ever expressed genuine pleasure in a song before? He had always gone to the opera as a sheep to the slaughter. Now his gaze, as it met mine, was whimsically defiant.

"Since you have been over here," he said, "I've been doing some studying on my own account, and I've found out the kind of music I enjoy. That's the kind. I'm not a bit nearer understanding Tetrizzini's fireworks or Ysaye's squeakings than when you left—don't think it—but I've gone to operas and concerts when I'd rather have smoked a pipe or played a game of bridge, and I've found that there is something in it for me, after all. That girl sang real music that would sound good in a man's home. Ellen, what are you going to sing at this coming-out that is arranged for?"

"Nothing that you will like," I said. "Tom, why have you been going to concerts? I know you hate them."

"You love them," he answered quietly, and I turned my head and looked into his big, honest eyes, too honest to pretend a taste that was not his, and saw there something that sought out and drew together all the scattered elements of my own character, as the chemist's solvent finds the particles of the ingredient he is seeking. It was as if a hypnotic influence had been removed, and I knew that whatever musical gift was mine, I was not



the woman to give it to the world at large—nor would I.

But I was angry—angry with Tom even in the moment of realizing that he held my happiness in his hands and that it would be his happiness to give it to me. Why had he let me go on preparing for a career I was utterly unfitted for? Why had he not given my pliant, yielding nature the backing of his strength, the firmness that the certainty of his love would have afforded? Tom had always been about, had been in my father's employ since his boyhood, was part of all our lives. As a possible rival of art, he had never entered my mother's imagination, but he had filled all of mine until I had come to see, as I thought, that my proposed profession was so distasteful to him as to dispel his interest in myself. Then I had followed, half-heartedly but doggedly, the path my mother marked out for me.



In a sort of terror I half withdrew the umbrella from over the sick child, then replaced it.

It was not that my music was without allurements. It was joy to me to

sing; but I was never able to enter fully into the sorrows of those girls whose aspirations for a public career are thwarted by adverse circumstances or obdurate parents. At the highest, my own ambitions had not soared above the concert stage, and even then it was not to the applauding crowd I dreamed of singing, but to the few whose triumph would be in my success, my mother, my father—and Tom. But if Tom cared nothing for it, or for me, why, then I must go on with the cultivation of my gift and make it a reason for what looked like a rather reasonless existence.

And always beside me had been the Will that from my childhood had dominated that part of my nature in which whatever was artistic in me inhered. By it I had been swept along, the current of my progress growing faster and faster, until now I found myself in a whirlpool of terrifying possibilities, the look in Tom's eyes like a life line from the shore, which yet I dared not grasp.

III.

How my mother instilled into my father something of her own gratification in the confidence of Bertini and the unusual opportunity that was to be afforded me, I do not know, but the urgent demands of the Italian upon my time and energies left me little season for companionship with the two travelers, the ultimate purpose of whose visit was left indeterminate until the decision of the great Weyling should be known.

Upon the day previous to that of the concert, my last rehearsal took place, a private one into which the Italian threw all his inspirational powers. Keyed up by the events of the past two weeks and by unacknowledged sleepless nights to a high nerve tension, and with something very like despair in my heart, for Tom remained silent

and noncommittal—or was it indifferent?—my rendering of *Isolde's* passionate cry into the stillness that surrounded her dead lover showed a fire hitherto unattained by me.

"It is the temperament that has awakened," the Italian cried rapturously. "Ah, Signorina Ellen, sing like that to-morrow night and Sir Arthur will know that a new-prima donna has been born into the world of opera. And now rest. Practice but fifteen minutes twice during the day to-morrow. Take a short walk, but let not the damp come to your ankles or to your throat. We must have not the slightest hoarseness. Sir Arthur will reach Paddington at seven. He will come with me to the hall, and I will meet you and madame there. Addio! I trust you."

Instead of ringing for the attendant, he accompanied me himself to the door and waved an encouraging hand as I passed through the postern gate.

Outside I hesitated. Had my mother been with me, she would have signaled a taxi, but the early evening air touched my hot cheeks and tired eyes beseechingly. It was but a few yards to the Kensington Gardens entrance. I turned toward it, and the quietude of the Broad Walk, with its cooing pigeons and occasional strolling figures, coaxed me within the gates and on across the park until the timeworn walls of the old palace reminded me it was scarce worth while to turn back. I might as well walk on to the Bayswater gate and there get a cab or an omnibus.

As I passed into the Bayswater Road, an omnibus drew up at the curb and passengers crowded about it. The seats upon the top were well occupied, but the conductor shouted that two more "outsides" could be accommodated, and, on the impulse of the moment, conscious that I was doing something neither my mother nor Bertini would approve, I climbed the steep little stair and found a seat near the front of the vehicle,

beside a young woman who held in her arms a sleeping child of two or three years. Both were poorly clothed, but the child had a thin old shawl wrapped about it; only a bit of scarlet cheek and a flaxen curl were visible.

Bus-riding was an almost forbidden pleasure. My mother disliked it for herself and feared it for me, a tendency to laryngeal trouble being my only weakness. This little departure from prescribed rules was exhilarating. Oxford Street would be lit up by the time we reached it, the throng of shoppers and homegoers at its thickest. If Tom were only with me to look down upon it! That steady-moving mass, each atom seemingly absorbed in reaching some definite goal, would appeal to every bit of his nature, as it appealed to mine. It was the commonplace struggles and joys and griefs of humanity that we both belonged to, and this artificial existence that I had been living for the past year, this dream life that I was bidden look forward to, was, in spite of the wonderful instrument in my throat, no more mine than his. Bertini had bidden me "Awake!" And during the last two weeks I had obeyed, but it was to a knowledge of myself and the needs of my own nature that I had awakened, and they were not the needs of the artist.

Tom had a month for London. During the days past he had occupied himself almost constantly with business, determined, it seemed, to get it out of the way and to leave me free from distractions that might interfere with my all-important preparation. In no slightest degree would he cripple my efforts or hamper my choice of a vocation, but his look and his words on the night we had listened to Marie Constant's song had told me that my choice must lie between the stage and his home. It could not include both.

My thoughts so engrossed me that I did not notice the heavily darkening sky

until, as the bus lurched away from the Marble Arch, leaving upon the pavement a struggling mob of people who had been endeavoring to push their way in, the woman beside me held a thin hand over the rail and said, with alarm in her tone:

"It's gowin' to rine!"

Then she leaned across me to ask the conductor, as he gathered fares in the aisle:

"Are there any plices inside?"

"Not one," the man said shortly, and, as he spoke, a sharp splash of drops made me raise my umbrella. The woman gathered her burden more closely in her arms and said, with a piteous break in her voice:

"Ow, what'll I do? The doctor says the little un's got the pneumownia, an' it'll kill 'er if she gets wet. I would 'ave tiken 'er inside, but there wasn't a plice, an' I 'ad to get 'er to the 'ospital quick."

I hastily shifted my umbrella so as to cover the child, and asked:

"Have you far to go?"

"To the Sick Children's 'Ospital. I 'ave to chynge to 77 at Southampton Row. Thank you, lidy, but your 'at will be all spoiled."

The rain, with the suddenness of a London shower, was pelting down in great drops that soaked as they fell, and I reached over, thinking to cover the child with the rubber apron that is usually attached to each seat for the protection of weather-caught travelers, but it was missing. My umbrella was the only protection for any of us. Already its points poured a trickling stream down my neck, and I withdrew my head entirely from its shelter, feeling that an all-over soaking might be less injurious than one confined to my neck and spine.

"The shower may last but a minute," I tried to encourage my companion, but she shook her head.

"It's very black," she said. "Rowsie's

been bad for three d'ys. I thought she'd just tiken cowl, but she was so 'ot an' sort o' light-eaded to-d'y that I took 'er to the insurance doctor. We 'ad to wite two hours in 'is office, there was such a crowd, an' then 'e said I must get 'er to the 'ospital, quick, 'er temperature was so 'igh. 'E telephoned for a bed for 'er at the Sick Children's 'Ospital, an'-I'm tikin' 'er there. But if she gets wet——"

The poor thing pressed the child closer in her arms, its labored breathing coming to my ears as she moved it, and I so directed the umbrella as to ward from it the rain, which was now a downpour, without regard for either the mother or myself. Oxford Street, through which we were passing, was thronged to its capacity, every available taxi scurrying along with its load, and to alight and attempt to get a cab for myself and my companions would have meant indefinite delay. My thin summer dress and trifling wrap clung to my shoulders and arms in soaking folds, and my skirts flapped heavily as I moved my dripping feet. Bertini's warning echoed: "We must not have the slightest hoarseness."

In a sort of terror I half withdrew the umbrella from over the sick child, then replaced it. Of what use was it to me now? I was drenched hopelessly, but the baby was still dry, the mother sheltering it with her arms and skirt and looking her gratitude to me.

The congestion of traffic made our progress slow, and it was necessary for us to change omnibuses at the junction of Holborn and Southampton Row. As we stood in the jostling crowd, endeavoring to elbow our way aboard, I was conscious that there was not a dry thread on me, and that the wind, striking upon my shoulders, was sending a shiver from neck to heel.

No. 77 had not a place inside, but while we were waiting for another bus, a taxi discharged a fare beside us and

I pushed my charges into the vehicle, following them and giving the hospital address to the driver.

"I don't know 'ow to thank you, miss," the young woman said. "If the biby lives, it'll be your doin'. An' all your pretty clothes is spoiled!"

"My clothes don't matter," I said. "I hope she'll get well." My teeth chattered so it was hard to speak steadily.

At the hospital I alighted, telling the man to wait, and again held the dripping umbrella over the moaning child; then I fled back to the shelter of the cab and gave my home address. But the chauffeur vainly endeavored to start his machine. It refused to move. With garments clinging about me, I sat shivering, while explosive snorts and long-drawn gurgles rose from the engine, producing nothing but an occasional shudder throughout the car. Desperately I called through the tube that if he was stuck, he must call another taxi, but the man postponed as long as he dared the necessity of handing his fare over to a rival. When he at last put his whistle to his lips, the effort was fruitless. Every taxi that hove in sight was already full, and the distance being short to Russell Square, I paid off my discomfited chauffeur, determined to walk rather than wait longer.

The wind, quickly risen and carrying in it the chill of early autumn, tossed my drenched garments about, and a dryness and difficulty in swallowing warned me of the dreaded swelling in my throat. Panic-stricken, as I thought of the approaching concert, I half ran through the gleaming, lamp-lit streets, splashing through pools and dashing recklessly among swift-rolling vehicles, finally meeting my mother's horrified eyes with an attempt at laughter that bordered closely upon hysteria.

Father and Tom were both there, anxiously watching for my arrival, but mother wasted no time listening to explanations. She hurried me off to bed,

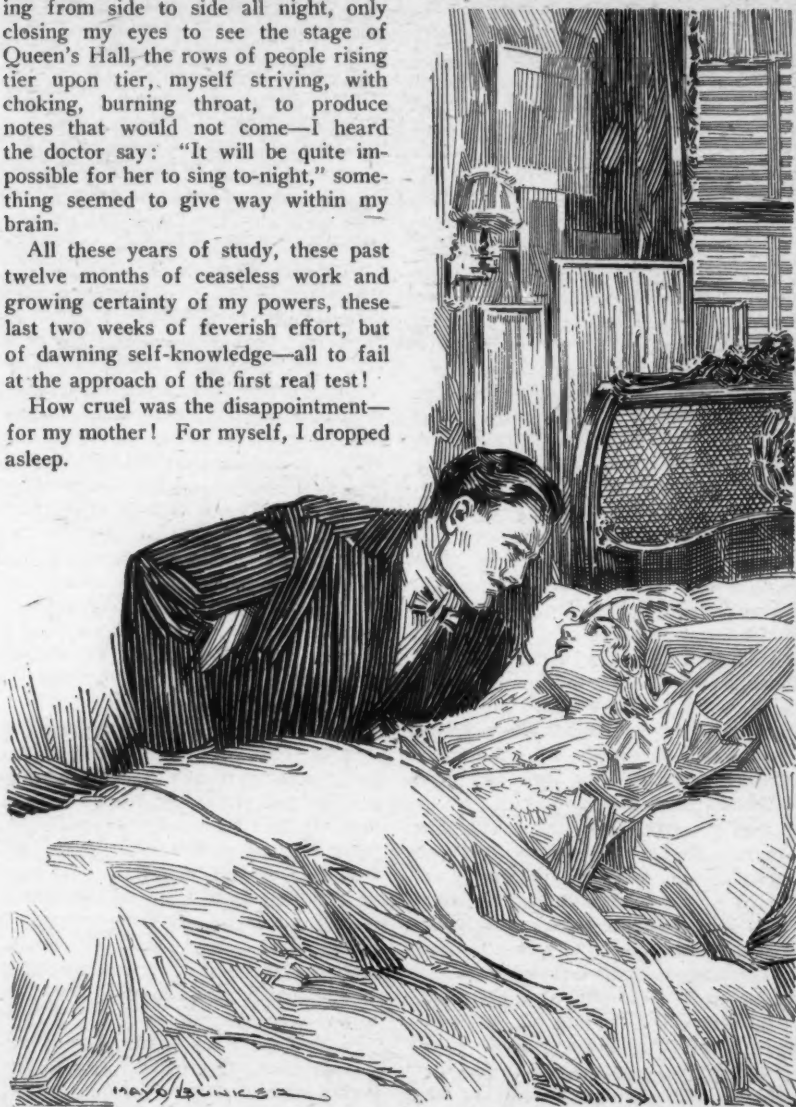
and in an hour's time sent Tom for a doctor.

When, the next morning—after tossing from side to side all night, only closing my eyes to see the stage of Queen's Hall, the rows of people rising tier upon tier, myself striving, with choking, burning throat, to produce notes that would not come—I heard the doctor say: "It will be quite impossible for her to sing to-night," something seemed to give way within my brain.

All these years of study, these past twelve months of ceaseless work and growing certainty of my powers, these last two weeks of feverish effort, but of dawning self-knowledge—all to fail at the approach of the first real test!

How cruel was the disappointment—for my mother! For myself, I dropped asleep.

It was two weeks later when they let Tom come into my room to say good-by. He was starting for home that night.



It was very hard to speak, but my eyes must have answered him.

"Ellen," he said, sitting beside my bed and holding my hand, "your mother tells me that the doctor sees no hope of the recovery of your voice during the winter, in this climate, and that as soon as you are strong enough, she is going to bring you home."

"Yes," I whispered. He had to stoop quite close to catch my words. "Does he think my singing voice will ever come back, Tom? Mother will not tell me."

Tom's eyes were troubled, but he was always honest with me. He took my other hand in his.

"He does not know," he said. "Ellen, will you think me a brute if I say that it will not matter to me if your voice comes back or not, so long as you come back to America—and to me?"

It was very hard to speak, but my eyes must have answered him, and after a while I said:

"Would you be satisfied if I could sing as well as Marie Constant, Tom?"

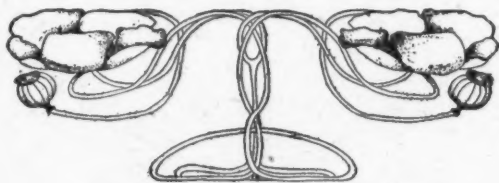
And he put his face down beside mine and said:

"Quite satisfied, dear."

"Then," I whispered, "I will be satisfied, too."

I did not tell my mother then what had passed between myself and Tom. I had been a silent girl always, and now I was almost literally so. The throat specialist and the singing teachers to whom we went before leaving London agreed that I had been overworked, that the too-ambitious Italian had put too great a strain upon my vocal chords, the violent inflammatory attack and nervous breakdown only completing the damage. However that may have been, it was months before even my speaking voice fully returned, and I had been married to Tom more than a year before I tried once more to learn a song.

It was the little low-range cradle song that Marie Constant had sung in Queen's Hall. My mother listens, loyally concealing, for my sake, the depth of her pity and disappointment, but Tom and little Ellen like to hear me sing, and with my audience I am well content.



Looking Under the Veneer

AS Billy Baxter said: "Not every girl who wears a sailor hat owns a yacht." That's what John Hays Hammond thinks.

He was at a dinner in New York one evening, and attempted to carry on a conversation with a young woman who was said by her friends in society to be exceedingly literary. Hammond, who made a few cracks about current literature, could not discover the exact talent of the girl.

"Do you like 'Marmion'?" he asked finally, jumping back to something more ancient.

"I don't," said the young lady. "Anyway, I don't think Americans do as a rule. You know, it's an English breakfast dish."

And, to this day, Hammond doesn't know whether the girl had never heard of Scott's poetry or whether she thought he was talking to her about such a vulgar thing as food.

What you want

IN four big parts, beginning in the issue out on the news stands April 7th, *The Popular Magazine* will publish the greatest story you will read in any magazine for a long time. *The Popular* has published a big share of the best fiction of the last ten years—the best of

Oppenheim, Chester, Vance, London, Rex Beach, Emerson Hough, Zane Grey, Van Loan, Peter B. Kyne, Henry C. Rowland, H. G. Wells' greatest book—"Tono Bungay"—the stories of B. M. Bower, Bertrand Sinclair, Frank L. Packard, and many others.

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The first of these, "Hidden Bay," is by Bertrand Sinclair, who wrote "North of Fifty Three."

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The third is "Sunny Mateel," by Henry Herbert Knibbs, who wrote "Overland Red."

The fourth, to be announced later, will be of equal importance and interest with the others. Besides this the next four issues of *The Popular* will contain forty remarkable short stories by such writers as

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Fifteen Cents.

April 7th.

All News Stands



Song for a Harmonica

By
Wallace Irwin

ILLUSTRATED
BY H.V. MAYER

ARCHIBALD I am called,
And I'm most extremely bald,
And me eyes are kind o' crissy-crossy, too.
All me teeth bend beneath,
Like a bedspring in its sheath,
And the Northern gals ain't fond o' Thomas Q.
Otherwise, otherwise,
I reely can't disguise
That in Southern lands I'm fatal to the fair;
And the ladies, and the ladies,
They would foller me to Hades
Jest to get the scantest fragment o' me hair—air—air.

Whang—whee—ah—ee,
Whang—whee—ah—ee,
Jest to get the slightest fragment o' me hair.

Once I knew in Peru
Señoritas' twenty-two
Who was truly so enamored o' me face
That they fought as they ought
With daggers that they bought
Till they laid around and littered up the place.
They would say every day:
"Here comes Beelzebub—hooray!"
And they'd clamor so tremenjus round me knees
That I brushed 'em off, I brushed 'em
In the hopes I might 'a' hushed 'em,
Yet they yelped: "Oh, mister, join the Mormons, please—ease—ease!"

Whang—whee—ah—ee,
Whang—whee—ah—ee,
Yet they yelped: "Oh, mister, join the Mormons, please!"

In Pekin 'twas a sin,
 Just the way I roped 'em in.
 Yeller beauties ne'er so much as seen me phiz
 Than they'd sing: "Ting-a-ling!
 What a very lovely thing!
 You could put the Wooden Idol out o' biz.
 Stick around, stick around!"
 They would wail in grief profound,
 Till the Emperor o' China, who was sick,
 Heard the weepin', heard the weepin',
 And he said: "Ye spoil me sleepin'!"
 So he kicked me out o' China pretty quick—kick—kick.

Whang—whee—ah—ee,
 Whang—whee—ah—ee,
 So he kicked me out o' China pretty quick.

But to-day, so they say,
 Maidens never come me way
 In this Massachusetts village where I stop;
 Or they wear quite the air
 Of "We-do-not-seem-to-care,"
 Which gives me ancient vanity a drop.
 In New England, in New England
 I'm neglected, lone and singl', and
 I'm aware that manly beauty in Peru—
 What they'll swallow as Apollo
 Back in China—doesn't follow
 That I fascinate the fussy Yankee Prue—boo-hoo!

Whang—whee—ah—ee,
 Whang—whee—ah—ee,
 That I fascinate the fussy Yankee Prue.



The Man Who Came Back

By Virginia Middleton

Author of "Fleishpots of Egypt," "Cotrelly's First Capture," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Barbara Wynn, a young American heiress, enters the library of the summer home, Twisted Trees, one September afternoon, to find her stepfather and guardian, Mr. Wynn, in a violent quarrel with her fiancé, Count Antonio Vitelli. Mr. Wynn is insisting that the engagement be broken; he will not tell why. This is all the stranger in view of the fact that it was he who practically forced Barbara into the affair. The count leaves in a threatening mood. Barbara learns from one of the servants of the arrival, earlier in the day, of a strange man, who was overheard speaking in a tone of authority to Mr. Wynn. The next morning the count is found dead beneath Barbara's window. The pistol with which he was shot has disappeared. During the publicity that follows, it is discovered that the dead man was not a count, but merely a former employee of the Vitelli family, Luigi Cardoni, masquerading under the title. Tommy Royle, an old suitor of Barbara's, comes to be of what assistance he can during the inquest. She also meets the stranger, whose arrival she vaguely connects with her broken engagement. He is introduced as James Delaney, a former ward of Mr. Wynn's, who mysteriously disappeared twelve years before, just as he was about to enter upon his inheritance, and has never been heard of until this sudden reappearance. Barbara is half attracted, half repelled by him; Mr. Wynn seems to dislike him. At the inquest, which reveals nothing of importance, one of the housemaids, Felicity, a young Frenchwoman, recently married to Carl Borkvist, the gardener, fails to appear. A note to her husband is found, in which she announces that she has left him—he will know why. Carl gives no explanation except that she was jealous. Several days later Barbara finds Carl in the chrysanthemum house, dead, with an empty bottle of carboic acid beside him. This second shock prostrates her completely.

CHAPTER III.

Being an Account of Events in Hartford in the Winter of 1910-11.

THE limousine in which I was taking my languid winter airing drew up under the porte-cochère of our house in Hartford. We had traversed half an acre of lawn since we had swung into the semicircular drive from the street. It was bleached lawn now, with thin films of snow lying dusty under the warmth of the straw-shrouded bushes. A half score of tall elms lifted their bare branches to the bright blue December sky. The house—broad, brownstone, capped with a tur-

ret, ornamented with iron-railed balconies, approached by a shallow flight of stairs to its central hall door—looked forbiddingly out upon the forbidding landscape. For half a mile on either side similar houses looked out upon similar acres of wintry lawn, of denuded elms, of counterpart dwellings on the opposite side of the wide, quiet street.

I was in the mood to challenge the air of unapproachable dignity and self-righteousness in which the whole region seemed enveloped.

"Did you ever see such a smug neighborhood?" I demanded crossly of my companion, who happened to be

The first installment of this story appeared in the April number of SMITH'S.

Madeline Royle. Madeline had come to Hartford some time in November, and had stayed on ever since, companioning me with cheerfulness.

"It looks good to me," she answered my criticism. Madeline's language sometimes smacks of her brothers'—she has three of those corrupters of English ever at her side ready to supply her with slang.

"You don't live here!" I snapped.

"You needn't taunt me with living in a seven-roomed flat in a doubtful neighborhood in New York," she laughed gayly. She jumped out upon the lowest of the stone steps and held out a hand for my slower descent. "Dear old Bab!" she added, giving my fingers an affectionate squeeze. "You actually have a touch of color in your face once more! And you're beginning to find fault with things— Oh, we'll all be happy yet!"

I was profoundly uninterested in the subject of my appearance. I was almost as profoundly uninterested in the subject of my feelings. The annoyance I felt in regard to the neighborhood in which I dwelt was as positive an emotion as any I had experienced since I had come out of the horrible, shuddering stupor in which I had been constantly haunted by staring, dead eyes—Tony's looking up toward my balcony, Carl's fixed on his chrysanthemums. There had been weeks when those had been the only sights my fancy had conjured up for me—I think now they were the weeks of my fever; after that had passed I had lain almost comatose, in a deep, untroubled indifference, for a few weeks, half conscious of the nurses who moved about my great, airy room, half conscious of Mrs. Wheelwright's tear-suffused greetings, of my guardian, somber, pallid, silent, in the doorway.

And then one day Madeline's face had appeared in the aperture of the open door—Madeline's face, homely,

gay, wholesome. It had been a surprise that had startled me out of the deep lethargy in which I had been lying. I learned afterward that it had been Tommy's idea—to send Madeline unannounced and uninvited to Hartford, and to try the effect of a possibly pleasant surprise upon my languor.

Well, it had worked fairly successfully. Although I was conscious of no added interest in the affairs of life, I grew gradually able to submit to dressing, to sitting up for a half hour, an hour, half a day; I grew gradually able to take the air, as I have described, leaning against the plum-colored upholstery of my stepfather's motors. And to-day I felt strong enough to find capacious fault with the architectural effects of my street.

"Look at them!" I went on from the drawing-room windows. "Just look at them! They all have one message. 'Here we sit,' they say, 'hopelessly unoriginal, cowardly alike, dull, secure in our likeness—no neighbor can accuse us of being uglier or poorer than himself! Here we sit, spelling money, money, money and dullness and self-satisfaction!' Oh, Madeline, they are awful houses! No one ever had an aspiration in one of them! No one ever had an impulse—not even an evil impulse! They smother ambition for anything except money, money, and sodden safety!"

"Bravo! Bravo, Miss Wynn!" cried a voice behind me.

The heavy maroon velvet portières that separated the drawing-room from the library behind it were parted, and James Delaney appeared. In the dragging weakness of my convalescence, I had almost forgotten him. He came forward with outstretched hand, assured—almost swaggering—in his air. His blue eyes looked out upon the world, as they had looked when last I had seen him, with their air of brilliant mockery; the mouth beneath the

pointed, ruddily golden beard was at its usual smiling angle.

"Oh!" I cried stupidly as I allowed him to take my hand. "I didn't know—I had forgotten— Does Mr. Wynn—"

"Mr. Wynn is out," he answered, "and I have taken the liberty of waiting for him until his return. I was sitting in the library when I heard your seditious utterances, and I couldn't forbear applauding them. You haven't been suffocated yet by the love of possessions! I'm glad to find you so vigorous—they have kept telling me that you were still very ill."

"Oh, then you have been here before—since we came back?" He smiled broadly beneath the bright beard.

"Several times," he answered. "I'm sorry you haven't received the messages I left for you."

"Perhaps I did receive them," I exonerated the household from negligence. "But I am just beginning to be myself again—I may have forgotten." Then I called to Madeline, hovering by the windows, civilly absorbed in the view. "Madeline, dear! I want to present Mr. Delaney. Miss Royle, Mr. Delaney."

They bowed gravely. It seemed to me that there was an instant antagonism between them. I saw the flash of a question, subtly insolent, on his face as he murmured the usual banalities, and promptly followed them with:

"A sister of Mr. Thomas Royle's, if I may judge from resemblance?"

Madeline's face softened wonderfully; she adores Tommy.

"Yes," she said. "Do you know my brother?"

"I had the pleasure of seeing him at Leominster this fall. Is he also in Hartford? I had thought—"

"Oh, Tom is in New York. I am merely making Miss Wynn an unconscionably long visit! Barbara, dear, isn't it time for your egg and sherry and

your nap?" She glanced suggestively at the big grandfather's clock ticking the slow hours away in the hall, just opposite the door that divided it from the drawing-room. "Miss Green will be after you in another minute."

"Are you staying here?" I asked Mr. Delaney as I turned to obey Madeline. "Shall I see you at dinner if I come down?"

He hesitated, laughed. "I am not yet invited," he said. "But—if there's a chance that you will be down, I shall try to worm an invitation from Mr. Wynn. Ah, there he is now!"

There was the sound of a turning latchkey, of an opening door; then my stepfather's tread fell in the hall. At the sound of voices in the drawing-room he paused at the door. At first his face showed a gleam of rather pleased interest as he caught sight of me. Then his eyes fell upon James Delaney. His face, normally pale, grew furiously red; his eyes, normally somber, flashed with angry fires. I should have said that Mr. Delaney's chances for an invitation were slight. Then the heat and light suddenly faded from my stepfather's face; he went white as paper, his eyes dulled. His voice was dragging as he said:

"You, Delaney? Waiting for me? I'll see you in the library." Then he added to me perfunctorily: "How do you feel to-day, Barbara, my dear? It's pleasant to see you downstairs again."

He passed me, seemed to shove Mr. Delaney ahead of him like a farmer's wife shooing her chickens, and the heavy maroon curtains fell behind him.

I found myself puzzling, not quite happily, over the reappearance of the big, blond, mockingly mysterious man from the West. Madeline, too, was asking me questions about him—questions that I could not answer.

"Tell me about that demigod-looking person downstairs," she said, when Miss Green, my nurse, had given me my egg

and sherry and had established me luxuriously upon my *chaise longue*, advantageously placed where I might command the fire on my marble hearth and the leafless trees on the lawn. "Tom said something about a mysterious reappearance when he came back from Twisted Trees this fall—is that it, that impudent red giant?"

"He's not a red giant," I objected. "He's a golden giant. Yes—he's the mysterious reappearance. I really don't know how it has come out—all right, I suppose, since he is here. Don't you remember hearing something about the strange disappearance of a ward of papa's about twelve years ago—just at the time he was to come into his money? We were at Miss Walters' then, but I recollect something about it all. I know it worried papa a lot—he had detectives searching for three or four years. Sara Nulty says he couldn't have been much more depressed by it if it had been a son of his own. Well, just about the time—indeed, the very day when——"

I broke off. I could not bring myself to name the day of James Delaney's reappearance. But Madeline understood.

"Yes, yes," she said hastily. "He reappeared then?"

"Yes. Of course, papa required proof of his identity—at any rate, he had not admittedly and finally received him as James Delaney when—when we were plunged into all that—confusion. And I don't know anything more about it all."

"I don't like him," stated Madeline, with decision.

"Don't you? I rather do. He's so different from other men."

"Well, it's obvious enough that he reciprocates your feelings—even going you one or two better."

Madeline spoke crossly. I laughed.

"You're the absurdest thing!" I told her. "You see romances in the most

unlikely places! The gentleman has seen me three or four times, all told—since we were grown up, I mean. I believe he was here for some holidays when I was about six."

"Well, you're not so repulsive that it would take a man more than four meetings to get over his first instinctive dislike of you," she said flatteringly.

But there was a little frown on her broad forehead as she moved about the room, and her large, wholesome red lips were compressed in a way foreign to their laughing lines. I knew, of course, what was working in Madeline's loyal mind—she wanted nothing and no one to stand between me and Tommy. She was unaware of the whole-hearted vigor with which he had declared himself no longer in love with me. I remembered how coldly, how reproachfully almost, she had congratulated me upon my engagement to Tony.

"I hope you will be awfully happy, Bab," she had said, "but of course you know it isn't what I wished."

And, recalling that, my mind shuddered back to poor Tony, who had masqueraded so gayly, who had played so daringly for high stakes. I fell into a sad, chilly little fit of musing. But soon Madeline began to speak of her brother; she had had a letter from him that morning. He had been advanced in his uncle's business, and he was talking of moving his family to a new apartment nearer the park, so that his mother could more easily take her airings.

"There never was such a dear as Tom!" said Madeline. "So stanch, so thoughtful—and never the least sentimental about it! He isn't a bit like those Sunday-school heroes who are good to their mothers, is he? But——"

"He's splendid," I agreed, but there was no ring of emotion in my voice as there had been in Madeline's. It had not been with Tommy, the good son, that I had flirted, but with Tommy, the oarsman; Tommy, the gladiator, with



"I hope you will be awfully happy, Bab, but of course you know it isn't what I wished."

laurels on his brow and daring in his eyes. Madeline recognized the indifference in my tones.

"Oh, well," she said lightly, "some day you'll appreciate him. I'm going over to Viola Kingston's to tea. Shall I give her your love?"

"Yes, please. And thank her for the jonquils. And, Mad, don't come hurrying home to your invalid—I must be a horrid bore!"

Madeline kissed me flutteringly on the hair as she left the room.

"Oh, you're getting quite like yourself again. After that outburst about the smugness of this comfortable neighborhood this morning, I expect rapid improvement. You'll be dancing in a fortnight."

She had not been long gone when my stepfather came slowly and heavily up the stairs. He paused at my door. Miss Green was in the big hall outside. I heard him exchange a few words with her, heard her leave and go downstairs, and then he rapped softly.

"Barbara, you seem more yourself to-day than you have seemed for a long time," he told me, after he had come in and spoken haltingly and uneasily of the weather. "We shall soon have you around again."

"Yes. I really feel like a giddy fake—that's Madeline's choice expression, not mine!—lying around as I do. I think I shall resume normal habits soon."

He wandered restlessly to the windows, commented upon some street scene, picked up a photograph on my desk, and laid it down again without seeing it. Then he said, his eyes upon some ivory trifle that he had taken up and was handling:

"Bab, my dear, is Miss Royle's visit— Is Madeline going to stay much longer?"

"Why, I don't know," I cried, astonished. "She hasn't said anything about going home. Why?"

"I—I— Doesn't her mother need her at home?"

"Papa!" I exclaimed. "What on earth are you talking of?"

"I—I don't know, my dear! I— My nerves are in rather bad shape. Miss Madeline is too—healthy. She's a strain on me. I don't undervalue her kindness and affection for you—but—if you could tactfully bring her visit to an end?"

I stared at him speechlessly. Madeline had always been one of his favorites, as far as he had any favorites. He was a cold, repressed man in all his human relations, but in so far as he ever unbent, he unbent to Madeline. I could not believe my ears.

"Of course, if you find her an annoyance—" I began slowly, watching him meantime. He avoided my eyes, and one of his dull, slow flushes mounted his dark face. "Oh, I can manage it!" I ended impatiently. "But I am sorry—she's my dearest friend."

"I'm sorry, too, Barbara." He looked

at me now, meeting my angrily accusing gaze with one of settled sadness. "I'm sorry, too. But I'm sure that in a little while—very soon, I hope—I shall be myself again and not subject to these ridiculous attacks of irritation."

Somehow I sensed in the room the presence of the man of mystery. Somehow I seemed to see his blue eyes shining with almost malicious amusement upon my guardian. The queer feeling of his proximity made me glance apprehensively at my closed door. It was a thick slab of dark mahogany, and it was tightly closed.

"I'll manage it," I told my stepfather. "Perhaps the doctor will say that I am well enough for a little change, and then I can go to New York with Madeline."

"Thank you, my dear." The words dropped rather wearily. He shivered and went nearer to the fire, holding out his thin, long-fingered, white hands to the blaze.

"By the way," I said, trying to speak casually, but oppressed by a fear that the topic would not adapt itself to casual treatment, "did the claimant of the James Delaney property turn out to be the real James Delaney?"

"He established his claim," answered Mr. Wynn briefly.

"What on earth was the explanation of his leaving it for—ten or twelve years, isn't it?"

"Nearly twelve years. Twelve years the third of next March."

"Well, what does he say about himself—" I began.

My guardian jerked his shoulders impatiently.

"I'm intensely tired of the identity or the identifying of Mr. Delaney, Barbara," he told me fretfully, almost spitefully. "Intensely! Let that topic rest for to-day, if you will."

Then he seemed moved by sudden compunctions.

"I'm sorry to be so pettish, my dear," he went on. "But I have been harassed

—horribly harassed—these last few months, and I begin to realize that I am not so young as I was once. Trouble—responsibility—uses me up! You've been troubled, too, poor girl! What we both need"—his face brightened a little—"is a vacation—a vacation where no one knows us, where no one will sympathize with our sorrows or laugh at our mistakes or try to make us criminally responsible for our tragedies. Those Leominster sleuths"—he elucidated his last reference—"are still on my trail!" He smiled a dry, wry smile. "They still think it would be a pleasing bucolic diversion if I could be tried for the death of—poor Tony."

He uttered the name with such kindness, his manner was so easy, so almost amused when he spoke of the absurdity of connecting him with the tragedy, that I ventured upon a question always in my mind:

"Papa," I cried swiftly, not pausing to weigh my words, "won't you tell me now what it was made you end my engagement?"

"My dear," he answered, immediately testy, "has not the man been proved an impostor? What more do you want? Do you want me to prove him a bigamist as well?"

"But you told him, when he himself asked you—for, of course, I see now that that was the discovery he dreaded—that you were not dissatisfied with his account of himself. You denied that you believed him an impostor. He asked you outright—and you outright denied it." I was still weak, and my voice took on the shrill quality of illness.

"You misunderstood, my dear. Or I desired to spare you a bad scene of claims and denials." His voice was assured, his manner calm, emphatic, decided. It was perfectly evident that he had no intention of ever telling me the real reason why he had made that sud-

den objection to the match he had urged upon me.

"Very well," I said, tearfully fretful in my invalidism. "You may say whatever you please now, of course. But I think"—I began to cry a little—"that it is going to be very hard if you make me give up all my friends—everybody—and never give me a reason!"

I turned my silly, tear-suffused eyes away, burying them in the cushion of my long chair, and began to sob. At first he answered me with an impatient exclamation, full of anger and disgust. Then he was quiet for a second. Then he sighed, and I felt his cold hand against my hair.

"There, there, Barbara! Don't cry," he said in that weighted, hopeless voice of his. "Don't cry. Some day, when we are both more ourselves, we will have a long talk about all the mysteries. But not yet, not yet!"

I heard him cross the room, and in a minute his voice, calm, low-toned, unemotional, was telling Miss Green that he had stayed too long and had tired me; he feared she would bar him from my room thereafter. And Miss Green's reassuring reply rang briskly through the hall. Oh, no; no one could do me any permanent harm now; I was too well along on the road to health. Then she came in, laid a professional finger on my wrist, a cool, capable hand upon my hot forehead, forced me to swallow a pill and a cup of bouillon, and crisply offered to read to me, which offer I promptly declined. Read! What could she read that would equal in interest for me the life in which I was a part?

I insisted upon going down to dinner that night, much to her horror and to Madeline's. But I had my own reasons for insisting. In the first place, I wished to see if James Delaney was still present in the house; in the second, I wished to prepare the theory of a sufficient recovery to allow me to go to New York with Madeline, since papa

had that ridiculous whim about sending her away. So I dressed slowly and rather excitedly for dinner, putting on a scarlet crape dress, a remnant of last winter's gorgeousness. I had worn only black since Tony's death, in response to some undefined instinct, but I had realized that I must put it off; I could not go around in mourning for the man whose engagement to me had been broken before his death, and who was proved to have been a cheat.

So, as I say, I made the break violently, irremediably, choosing no halfway effects of black and white, of mauve and lavender, but fairly flashing upon the drawing-room group in red. And one pair of eyes brightened amazingly as I made my flaming, unheralded appearance at the door. They were the eyes of Mr. Delaney, a sort of image of the untamed wilds masquerading as a clubman, as he stood before the carved white marble mantel and exchanged amiable vapidity with Mrs. Wheelwright, stooping at intervals to pick up the ball of pink yarn from which she was knitting. So he had achieved an invitation to remain!

"Barbara!" cried my stepfather and Madeline in a breath.

"I'm through with being sick," I announced cheerfully. "I'm as well as any one. Watch the dinner I shall eat!"

In response to the brilliant admiration glowing in James Delaney's eyes, I began to experience what I had not expected to experience again—the old excitement of the chase rising in me. I suppose I should blush to own it—yet why? I did not choose what sort of woman I should be; and it is true, however untraditional, that kindling glances always started a little flame in me; that I scented conquest from afar—felt in the introductory handshake the premonitions of coming thrills, desired to test the emotional possibilities of every situation in which there was a "possible" man. So when this compell-

ing person who had made his way into my existence by strange routes looked at me with that bold glance of admiration and of understanding, my blood leaped unexpectedly to the challenge.

I will do myself the justice to say, however, that I was ashamed of the impulse that I felt. I took myself sternly to task as I ate my oysters. What, was I, who was barely emerging from the shadow of a dreadful tragedy in which one lover had been killed—was I ready to play the old, pleasing game with the next man who presented himself? I stole a covert glance at Mr. Delaney to refresh my memory as to his appearance; his eyes were fixed on me—waiting. Again the blood surged up in me; this time I was conscious of an element of fear in my excitement. He looked, with his wonderful color, his great frame, his chiseled beauty of feature, so irresistible; there was the air of the world's strange, wild places upon him, even in the habiliments of ultracivilization; there was a confession—a boast—of lawlessness in the deep, measured, mocking tones.

I felt that I should try conclusions with no known, no appraisable force, should I try conclusions with this man. I dimly recalled the stories of his insubordination, his wildness, his recklessness, which I had heard recounted when he was a lad at school. I dimly recalled the theories of his disappearance when he was half through the only college in which he had succeeded in remaining for any appreciable length of time. There had been a woman connected with that, young as he had been! I stole another look at him. His eyes were still on me, and now there was a smile on his face. He lifted his wine-glass and held it aloft for a second. The lights shone on the yellow bubbles, making them dance like jewels.

"A glass of wine with you, Miss Barbara," he said.

I could feel my stepfather's icy glare

upon him for the use of my given name; I could feel Madeline's dark anger and resentment; I could even feel Mrs. Wheelwright's fluttered sense that something was amiss. But I lifted my own glass in response to the invitation or the challenge, and touched its rim with my lips. He drained his, and then, turning, deliberately flung it into the grate behind him.

"A thousand pardons, Mrs. Wheelwright," he said easily, turning again to the astounded table. "To-morrow you will let me accompany my apologies with restitution. To-night"—he looked at them all, smiling inscrutably—"to-night we will only rejoice over Miss Wynn's restoration to—herself."

After dinner, Madeline, still angry and upset by what she regarded as the impertinence of the man, stalked away from the fireside group and seated herself at the piano. She had a good contralto voice, and I begged her for a song.

"I am not in the mood to sing," she answered curtly, crashing out a discord on the keys.

But by and by she began to croon a song we had sung at school, and then some little French things, and then—it was cruel of her!—the boat song of the Neapolitans that Tony had been wont to carol forth in his delightful voice. But I clenched my teeth and bore it. Not so Mr. Wynn; he listened for a second, then he sprang to his feet and abruptly withdrew. We heard the heavy drawing together of the folding doors between the drawing-room and the library. Mrs. Wheelwright dozed over her knitting, her nodding head keeping uncertain time with Madeline's music.

"Mr. Wynn is not quite himself these days," remarked James Delaney, sending a lazy glance toward the place of my stepfather's retreat.

"No; he has had a great deal to bother him lately."

"Quite so. It's too bad he takes it so seriously. It would have been a good thing for him to have tried the West for a while—where the loss of a human life isn't regarded as a calamity to darken existence for all the living!"

He shrugged his shoulders. But I stared at him in wide-eyed amazement. "But, Mr. Delaney! Papa has been West. Why, that was where he and your own father became friends!" I exclaimed.

He started, looked at me, then threw his great head back and laughed heartily.

"Of course, of course!" he cried. "Well, it profited him very little. Else he would not allow the death of a—you will forgive my calling him a miscreant, Miss Wynn?—of a miscreant who was endeavoring to wed you under false pretenses, to color his whole life."

"You seem to take a perverse view of values," I answered steadily. "You think death—assassination—murder—a trifle; and you call imposture a crime!" "Because the imposture was meant to do you harm," he answered in a low voice, accenting the pronoun. "Believe me, Miss Wynn, on any subject that touches your interests, I am prepared to be fierce enough."

The piano stopped with a bang, Mrs. Wheelwright awoke, and I stood up.

"I think it is the part of wisdom for me to go upstairs," I announced, speaking in my rôle of invalid.

"You will have to go farther than that to escape me," he told me, rising and standing close to me, speaking in a half whisper, daringly misinterpreting me.

"I mustn't attempt too much the first day," I went on. "Will you tell papa good night for me, Mrs. Wheelwright?"

"I'm coming up, too," announced Madeline snappily. "Good night, Mrs. Wheelwright. Good night!"

The second leave-taking was for James Delaney, and it was as rude as

Madeline knew how to make it. He smiled benevolently, almost sympathetically, upon her childish anger, and held the door open for us as we left the room.

"I hate that man!" she told me when we had gained my chamber. "I hate him! Why, the very way he looks at you is an insolence! And the way he called you by your first name—Really, Barbara, I don't see how you permit such a thing!"

"Oh, heavens, Madeline! A slip of the tongue! What's the good of making a fuss about a trifle?"

"And breaking the wineglass—silly, spectacular thing to do! Does he think he's a character out of a cheap historical novel? And you—well, you certainly aren't discouraging him, Bab!"

"Discouraging my grandmother!" I retorted inelegantly. "You're obsessed on the subject, Madeline. If you come down to facts, I don't know that I like him any better than you do. I don't trust him any more than you do—and trust, I suppose, is the basis of friendship."

"But not of passion—not of infatuation!" flared Madeline. She crossed the room to me and took me by the bare shoulders, shaking me lightly. "Oh, Bab, Bab!" she cried. "Don't I know you? Haven't I known you since you were a skinny girl who couldn't keep your eyes off the boys on the street, when we went out for our walks at Miss Walters'? Don't I know that you can no more help being interested



I lifted my own glass in response to the invitation or the challenge, and touched its rim with my lips. He drained his and then, turning, deliberately flung it into the grate behind him.

—to put it mildly—with a halfway presentable man, than you can help the color of your hair? That was what was winning you with—the count. You liked the game and he could play it. Oh, I'm just to every one! I don't deny that he could play the game of hearts in a way that must make a plain, honest, industrious American look like a clodhopper! And so he was actually winning you—not your true love, for I don't think that can be gained by counterfeits—but your interest, your excited interest, your ambition, your expectation. But—well, it happened terribly for him, poor wretch, poor and pitiable for all his wickedness and deceit! And I somehow was foolish enough to think that you would be sobered, changed; that you would see things as they are.”

“And you don't think that I do?”

“Well, if you do—why are you encouraging that man downstairs? You are encouraging him, Barbara—don't pretend that you are not. Your eyes seek his, sometimes openly and daringly, sometimes shyly. Your color fluctuates for him—”

“Oh, come now! I'm willing to be scolded for the sins of my eyes, over which I am supposed to have some control, but not for my blushes.”

“Blushes!” Madeline was scornful. “They aren't blushes—blushes are different. But, Bab, think what he is—a wild, bad boy, who has been in Heaven knows what wild, bad places, and has done Heaven knows what wild, bad things for twelve years or so. And he has the assurance to walk into your house and to make eyes at you. And you don't know how many Indian squaws he's been married to in the West, or how many Nautch girls he has owned in the East, or—”

“Madeline, can you put your hand on your heart and tell me exactly what a Nautch girl is?”

“No!” snapped Madeline, with ex-

plosive honesty. “I can't, and it doesn't matter. You know what I mean to say about that detestable creature you're beginning to flirt with. And, oh, it isn't safe, Barbara; it isn't safe! It isn't even as safe as with that poor, cheating foreigner!”

“Safety has never appealed to me as the highest form of earthly good,” I answered perversely. “And as for the gentleman's past—you know, Madeline, that boys will be boys and that— Oh, well, what's the use of talking? I shall probably never see Mr. Delaney again. When he has finished his business with papa, he will doubtless be off for another twelve years—and off without me,” I added mischievously.

“I hope so sincerely. But I'm not at all sure of it. Oh, you foolish, vain little Barbara! You foolish little bird! You think you're charming the serpent when he stares and stares at you—but it's you that are being charmed. However, you'll do as you please—no matter whose heart breaks,” she ended lugubriously.

I was almost moved to dissipate her fears by acknowledging the full measure of the distrust with which the mysterious Mr. Delaney inspired me. But she annoyed me a little with her assumption of all the wisdom of the ages, and so I teased her by merely laughing and saying that we should see what we should see. And then, as I was pondering how to suggest to her that she and I should leave Hartford for a visit to New York, she saved me the trouble of further consideration.

“I've got to go back, Barbara,” she said. “I forgot to tell you—I grew so wrought up over this man—but I had a letter from home on the four o'clock delivery. Tom's got appendicitis, and they've decided to operate the day after to-morrow. I shall have to go down on the eight o'clock in the morning.”

“Appendicitis!” I echoed. It had

never occurred to me that Tommy Royle could be sick like other people. "Appendicitis!"

"Yes—don't look so scared. He's the only Royle left who hasn't had it. We don't mind the operation in our household more than the average family minds a trip to the dentist. There isn't the slightest danger with Tom, you know—he's in perfect condition. I'm not worried the least in the world."

"Oh, Madeline!" I faltered. "Oh, Madeline!" I wanted to go with her; I wanted to sit in the waiting room at the hospital, and to hear the first reports from the operating room. And all that I could do toward showing the anxiety and the grief I felt was to say to Madeline: "I'm sorry I teased you about the man downstairs—I'll never look at him again. Truly! I don't care a tuppenny bit for him—truly I don't, Madeline. And you've been such an angel to me—"

"A fine angel, scolding you like a grandmother!" Madeline laughed her natural, cheery laugh again. "And don't make vows that you couldn't keep to save your life. Only—be careful of him, Barbara."

"Indeed, indeed I shan't have anything at all to do with him."

"I don't think Mr. Wynn likes him," pursued Madeline meditatively.

"Papa isn't liking any of us too well lately. He's edgy. He's not himself. I think the mortification of having been taken in by—you know—"

"Yes, of course."

"—rankles more in him than it does even in me. He's such a dignified person, such a man of substance and standing, that to be fooled—and so seriously fooled—by a bogus nobleman—"

But, in spite of my bravado, my effort to speak matter-of-factly failed. My lips quivered.

"Don't talk about it, dear. Of course it has been a hideous three months for all of you. I wish there weren't so

many unsolved mysteries in the world. Even a horror, if it can be spelled out, cleared of uncertainty, isn't unendurable. It's uncertainty that racks people. That's what's the matter with Mr. Wynn. But he's been lovely to me, though, in spite of everything. He's never been more thoughtful and—sort of dear."

"Really?" I cried half incredulously, remembering papa's request that I should get rid of her.

"Yes. Nicer even than usual. And he and I always get along like a house afire! I never have any patience with people who tell me what a self-repressed, difficult, cold man Mr. Wynn is—for lots of people do call him that. He's as warm as possible if one is only warm toward him."

"And he's really been as—er—nicer as usual this time?"

"Nicer," declared Madeline emphatically.

And then she kissed me good night and good-by, promised to telegraph me about Tommy, and went off, leaving me to ponder why my guardian was so capricious as to tell me he found Madeline trying while he was persuading her that he found her a comfort and a delight.

"James Delaney, now," I said to myself, "quite unmistakably disliked her—I suppose that was on Tommy's account." I smiled to myself over the jealousy I felt between the house of Royle and the scion of the Delaneys. "And he'd be quite frankly glad to have her go, if he knew it. But papa—"

Then it suddenly, absurdly, ridiculously, horribly occurred to me that my stepfather's command to me in regard to Madeline had come on the heels of James Delaney's meeting with her. And, as in a dream, I heard again the voice of Mollie, in the dining room at Twisted Trees, telling me of curious threats and commands James Delaney

had uttered to my stepfather in regard to Tony. My head swam.

When Miss Green came silently in a few minutes later, she pronounced me feverish from overdoing. She would not allow me to dine downstairs soon again, she scolded, if it affected me in this manner. But after she had put me to bed and had darkened the room to everything except the firelight, I lay staring wide-eyed into the gloom, and asked myself again and again if it were possible—possible—that my stepfather took orders from the man who had once been his ward. And if he did, why? Grim tales of "controls" began to struggle toward the light in my mind. I shuddered. By and by I fell asleep, and awoke in the morning to laugh at the fantastic unreality of my midnight musings.

CHAPTER IV.

The news from Tommy was reassuring; he had taken his appendicitis easily, and had been a credit to the family record. I rejoiced over the telegram from Madeline; Mrs. Wheelwright rejoiced; even Mr. Wynn rejoiced. The news for the allotted two weeks of possible disaster was all as cheering as possible, and at the end of the fortnight we put Tommy briskly out of our anxious thoughts and gave ourselves to other considerations. Mrs. Wheelwright's problem was with her sister in Ohio. Nancy needed her that winter. Nancy was widowed newly; she hadn't been with Nancy for a long time; and she and Nancy were all that were left— She grew a little tearful.

"Go out to her, Cousin Marian. Spend the next three months with her," said papa, as poor Cousin Marian rambled and maundered on. "I am sure Barbara and I can take care of each other—certainly with Sara Nulty's oversight. And it will do you as much good to see Nancy as it will do Nancy good

to see you. Go out to Sandusky and spend the rest of the winter."

"But it seems so selfish, when you and Barbara are——"

"Not a bit of it," I reassured the good lady. "I shan't be going out any to speak of this winter, and so I don't need a chaperon, Mrs. Wheelwright. It's your one chance to see your sister, for next season I shall lead you an awful dance. You can get out there for Christmas if you hurry."

"Well," she conceded, "of course you can't go about much this year." And with the note of acquiescence in her voice we knew that she was going.

My guardian, once the matter was decided, seemed strangely anxious to expedite her departure. In three days she was gone.

I waited in the motor outside the station while he put her aboard her train. When he joined me, he was sighing heavily, but as if in relief. Then he mopped his forehead; it was damp, although the weather was brilliantly zero. He sank against the cushions of the automobile and closed his eyes like a man exhausted. I looked in some surprise and bewilderment at him, and marked how pinched and worn his face was growing, and how the iron-gray patches in his dark hair were whitening.

"Papa, you're all done up!" I cried.

"I need a change, I think," he admitted, opening his eyes. "Let's take a vacation, Barbara. Let's get away from here."

"With all the pleasure in life! But where shall we go? Palm Beach—abroad?"

"No, no, no! No place where all the idle fools in the world congregate. Somewhere where no one knows us, where we won't meet chatterers and gossips——" Poor papa! The notoriety of the past three months had told on his nerves sadly.

"Where shall it be—where is that land of pure delight?" I asked lightly.

He smiled in a melancholy fashion.

"You may well ask!" he answered me. Then, after a minute: "What would you say to chartering a little yacht—a pretty little schooner-rigged yacht, with an auxiliary screw—and cruising in West Indian waters a while?"

"Just you and I?" I cried, unable to conceal a sort of dismay.

"You might ask Madeline," he suggested.

"But you said—why, you said she was too healthy—you said she irritated you," I stumbled.

"Well, I'm better now. I should like to have her, if it would add to your pleasure. And Sara Nulty—you could take Sara for an attendant. Only—I shouldn't want Madeline to join us until we were ready to step aboard the boat."

"Yes, but——"

"And if she goes," he went on, interrupting me decisively, "there is one thing she must be careful about—she must let no one—no one at all—but her mother and Tom know where she is going. And they must keep it a secret. Otherwise"—he looked fixedly at me, as if to impress his views upon the plastic material of my mind—"otherwise, we shall not have a moment's peace. Once it is generally known that we are the unfortunate Wynns, who—well, who were concerned with the mystery of September, we'll be badgered for interviews, theories—God knows what! We won't be able to touch a port without being nagged to death."

He spoke vehemently. I stared at him in growing, chill wonder. Usually he was the least violent of men in his speech; usually his language was almost pedantically chaste and correct; usually that "God knows what" would have been unthinkable on his Puritan lips. But he was not himself to-day.

"But—won't the people where we

land, and all that, know who we are anyway, even if Madeline's family doesn't tell?"

"We can travel incognito," he said.

I gasped. The incognito, it had always seemed to me, was merely a prettier name for an alias when anything but royalty assumed it.

"Does the idea shock you?" my stepfather went on. "I hope not. I'm serious about it. You have no notion, my dear, what I have been through in the last months—what inquisitions, what suggestions, what criticisms! I want to get away from it all long enough to recover my tone and balance." He spoke collectedly enough now. "Sometimes I think that I shall go mad unless I can escape from it. It sounds almost unmanly, doesn't it? But notoriety has always been unbearable to me."

"Of course, we'll go in any fashion you like, papa," I cried warmly. I felt an upwelling of pity for him—greater pity for him than I had felt for myself in the affair. I felt, too, that I should have known him better, cared for him more, if he had more often unbent and more often taken me into his confidence, even to such a slight extent as in this latest speech of his. We had always lived, since my mother's death, more or less at arm's length. I had a moment's young, ardent determination that it should no longer be so, in so far as I could bring about a change. "And what is our incognito to be?" I demanded, trying to laugh. He smiled.

"Oh, we'd better choose a name that will not be challenged by our baggage marks and the monograms on your clothes, had we not? Wilder is a good enough name, isn't it? And as we shall live aboard the yacht, there will be no embarrassment of false registering at hotels and all that. Wherever we land, it will be for the day only. What do you say?"

I acquiesced in the plan, fantastic as I thought it. And—so expeditiously

does money accomplish the desires of its possessors—a week more saw us at New London, stepping aboard a well-equipped little yacht, sentimentally christened the *Flora-dan*, by the conjunction of two names of the fond souls now willing to hire out their pretty craft. I sneered a little in my thoughts over *Flora* and *Dan*, and all the race of lovers.

We steamed southward; we were to pick Madeline up at Norfolk, avoiding New York entirely. From the instant we cleared the harbor, my guardian's spirits seemed to rise. The oppression, not only of the past few months but of his whole life as I had known it, seemed to drop away from him; he was free, tranquil, easily amused, a man of wide information and of a scholarly humor. My mother's memory was redeemed in my thoughts from a certain charge of incomprehensibly dull taste which I had sometimes made against her; certainly this man with whom Madeline and I were spending golden days must have had the power to charm a woman a score of years before!

Not until we were at Kingston did we meet a reminder of the mystery we were sailing to forget. We had touched at half a dozen places without happening upon any one who knew us or recognized us. After each escape from the shore to the *Flora-dan*, unsaluted by our names, it seemed to me that Mr. Wynn brightened more and more, walked with an erecter confidence, took a livelier interest in the world outside his thoughts. We had sailed rather purposelessly, putting in now at one of the less well-known West Indian ports, now at a Mexican, now at a Costa Rican. The stop at Kingston had not been in our calculations, but the captain and the steward both demanded it, each requiring some sort of supplies that Kingston seemed best able to furnish. With obvious reluctance, "Mr. Wilder" gave the necessary command. He de-

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clined to go ashore at first, but when he learned that we were likely to be there for several hours, he seemed to take desperate courage, seemed almost to challenge fate, and went ashore with Madeline and me in the gig.

Our quest here, as everywhere, was native curios, fabrics, oddities. We wanted half a dozen jipijapa hats each, to take back for our own summer use and as presents. We dragged papa shopping with us. And in the first store at which we stopped, as I was balancing the texture of two hats one against the other, I heard a familiar voice. It was Felicity's voice, and she was inquiring the price of a roll of gauzy material, not unlike the pineapple gauze of the Philippines. I dropped my hats and swung around. Papa and Madeline were at the other end of the shop, bent over a counter of seed-pearl trinkets.

"Felicity!" I cried.

The slight, graceful figure seemed arrested in the motion to turn. I was sure that the name, the call, had reached the ears for which it was meant, and that they had recognized the summons. I was sure that Felicity Borkvist had started to turn toward me, and that she had caught herself just in time. I looked more closely at the piquant, dark profile, at the neat, rather jaunty clothing. It was Felicity's own brown hair that was coiled beneath the prim black straw sailor hat. It was Felicity's own graceful neck that rose from the severely tailored white shirt waist. I went nearer.

"Felicity!" I said again.

This time the sound was in her very ears. She could not ignore or pretend to misinterpret it. She turned toward me, polite question in her blankly unrecognized eyes. In spite of myself I drew away an inch—was it possible that I was mistaken? Then I shook off the doubt.

"*Parr-donnez-moi*," said the girl, rolling her r's more foreingly than Fe-

licity had been wont to do, and speaking with a much more marked accent, "*mais*—Madame speaks to me?"

"I—I—aren't you Felicity Borkvist?" I bungled forth, after a while, completely nonplused by her self-possession. She smiled blandly.

"*Mais non, madame,*" she answered me, in Felicity's very tones.

"But—but you look so like her! Oh, come, Felicity—you are Felicity!"

"*Non, madame. Je suis Madame Barbier—Madame Henri Barbier.* The—the—how you call him?—the storekeeper, he will tell you."

She indicated the storekeeper on the opposite side of the room, much engaged in welcoming in a new group of tourists. I could not well break in upon his bowing and smiling and waving. Moreover, I had some hesitation about displaying doubt of a lady's knowledge of her own identity, about making a scene.

"I beg your pardon, then," I said. "It is a wonderful resemblance."

"Madame," confessed the alleged Madame Barbier, with a humorous whimsicality, "*sometimes je pense—sometimes I think me the most—how you call it?—the most usual-looking lady in the world—so many people think I look like their friends. Bon jour, madame.*"

Somehow she had edged her way toward an adjoining room as she spoke, and, while I accepted her speech with a sort of misgiving and doubt, she faded from my sight behind some old chairs of heavy, ancient, West Indian mahogany. I took up my jipijapas once more, and in a minute the proprietor was again at my service, asking if I had selected a hat. I selected three. Then I looked around for Madame Barbier—I *would* ask the storekeeper about her! But I did not see her.

"The lady who was here when I came in—the French lady—young, in a black

sailor—she is madame——" I waited for him to go on with her name.

"Pricing the gauze, was she not? She is not madame anything, so far as I know. She is the traveling companion—maid, governess, I scarcely know what—of an American lady and her little girl—guests at the Constant Springs Hotel. Mrs. Vosburg is the lady's name."

The impudence of the girl! How dared she? How dared she down-face me as to her identity, give me a false name with such utter assurance? And—not only how did she dare to act in such a way toward me, but why did she wish to? Why did she wish to deny that she was Felicity Borkvist? Had she heard of Carl's suicide? Did she fear my reproaches for her desertion of the brooding, melancholy soul? I pondered for a minute. Then my lips came together with a snap.

"How far is it to the Constant Springs Hotel?" I demanded.

The shopkeeper named the number of miles, and I debated with myself. How could I get rid of papa for a while—for a period long enough to run out to the hotel, to interview Mrs. Vosburg, to face Felicity, and to force her to tell me her reasons for wishing to deny herself to me? I went over to him and Madeline, who were loading themselves up with useless junk. I said that I wanted to motor out to the hotel; I made some monstrous statements about the natural beauties to be encountered en route. Mr. Wynn's face clouded.

"Barbara!" he reproached me.

"Well, if you think it is too much, papa," I suggested, "why don't you let Madeline and me go? We'll be back to meet you at the gig landing in an hour and a half. You wouldn't mind that?"

He hesitated, but finally he consented. In the motor I told Madeline of my meeting with Felicity and of the admirably acted little ruse by which Fe-

licity had got rid of me and my questioning. Madeline looked grave.

"Why on earth should she have acted like that?" she demanded. "What has she to lose by being herself? Barbara, where did you get Felicity, anyway? What references did she have?"

"Her references were awfully good—though I didn't look them up myself. But she came to us straight from the Graham-Warrens. Lola was quite crazy about her, but couldn't keep her when there was that dreadful smash-up in her husband's business—you remember—when he had to sell his Stock Exchange seat, a year or a year and a half ago."

"Yes, I remember about the Graham-Warrens, of course. And Lola had looked up all her previous references?"

"So she said—and I believe it was so. You know Lola would love writing to a ladyship about a maid, and Felicity had been employed by half the aristocracy of England and France, according to the crested papers she kept in her trunk!"

"H-m-m! Lola was always a flighty fool, more easily hoodwinked than any one I ever met."

Madeline frowned over the intellectual shortcomings of our old friend. I acquiesced with only a nod. The subject of the easily hoodwinked was personally embarrassing to me; it made me



"Papa! Papa!" I cried. "Let Mr. Delaney come aboard. This is dreadful! You asked him, you know!"

think of papa and myself and of the laughable figure we cut in the public eye. And, by the way, it had been at Lola's that we had first met Tony. It seemed to me as if a light flashed for a second at the end of a long, dark corridor and then faded again.

We were out at the hotel before the shock that this recollection unaccountably gave me had worn away. I asked for Mrs. Vosburg, my heart pounding a little with the sense of adventure. The clerk was suavely regretful. Mrs. Vosburg must be sailing at that very moment. She was returning to New York to-day by the steamer that left Kings-

ton at that very hour. I turned my blank face to Madeline. Then I suddenly bethought me. I asked if her New York address was known.

"Pardon me, I am not permitted to give the address of a guest to persons unknown to the management, miss. I am sorry. It is the rule of the house. But if you write a note, it will be forwarded."

But I did not wish to write a note for Felicity to see—to see, perhaps, before her employer! So I confirmed the clerk in whatever evil opinion he might have of me by declining to avail myself of the offer, and went back with Madeline to the waiting motor.

"Oh, well!" I conceded to the perverse facts that had declined to accommodate themselves to my plans. "I dare say it's just as well. I dare say Felicity has nothing to tell, even if she would tell it—which she wouldn't! And, anyway, I dare say the best thing for us to do is to try to forget all the horrors rather than to stir them up again."

"Much better," agreed Madeline half-heartedly. And then we stopped at the boat landing.

The *Flora-dan's* longboat lay bobbing at the end of a wooden pier; some of our crew lounged near her. A man was seated on a camp stool near the entrance to the pier. When I had paid my chauffeur and turned to walk down to the boat, the figure arose nonchalantly and blocked our path. I looked up into the amused blue eyes of Mr. James Delaney.

"God is good to the Irish," he announced, by way of greeting. "I thought it was you when you got into the automobile an hour and a half ago. And it was. I canceled my sailing on the *Fürst Frederick*—there are her smokestacks now, against the sky—on the chance that it was you! And it was. God is very good to the Irish. How do you do, Miss Royle?"

I lacked Felicity's skill in denying

my identity. I gazed up at him, profoundly troubled—profoundly excited.

"Why, what are you doing in Jamaica?" I asked.

"Looking for you—what else?" he responded. Madeline darted one of her withering glances at him. "See!" he cried. "Miss Royle either does not believe me or thinks I should try to conceal my motives. But I never conceal my motives!"

He was giving all his eyes to me again. I was fluttered, agitated. What of my stepfather? What of our foolish incognito? What of poor papa's intense desire to avoid recognition—a desire associated in my mind largely with this very man?

"I am sorry," I said, as crisply and finally as I could, "that you should have canceled your sailing for so slight a cause. For we are cruising, and are going aboard our vessel now. We'll see you some time in Hartford?"

I meant to be very casual, rather freezing. But he laughed his lazy laugh.

"Oh, long before that!" he answered. "It was part of my good fortune to encounter Mr. Wynn, and he—he is the soul of hospitality!—asked me to be one of your party. I hope he did not err in not consulting you? I hope my presence will not be disagreeable to you?"

He spoke his last sentences with a simplicity usually lacking in his utterances; he seemed sincere, and he looked at me, awaiting an answer. I don't know what foolish ambition for conquest, what foolish desire to pit my wits against his, seized me. I only know that, frankly as he seemed to put his question, I felt it as a challenge.

"Any friend of papa's," I answered demurely, looking him straight in the eyes, "is, of course, a welcome guest to me."

He returned my stare for a second, then he threw back his head with his familiar gesture and broke into his familiar laugh.

"You are a model daughter!" he assured me. "I had hoped for your filial acquiescence in your father's plans, so I had already taken the liberty of having my things sent aboard your—what is the graceful little thing's name?" he added, looking out to the blue water where our vessel lay.

"The *Flora-dan*," I replied. I was a little annoyed at the impudence of the man in actually daring to have his things sent aboard the yacht. "I wonder where papa is? He was to have met us here."

"He has gone aboard, I believe. He left word for you to follow at your leisure."

"Oh!" I received the information rather blankly.

We walked down the long stringpiece together. I could feel Madeline seething with rage beside me. When we reached the point below which the gig of the *Flora-dan* was moored, I ran down the slimy stairs behind Mr. Delaney and took his hand for assistance into the boat. But Madeline paused before coming aboard.

"Nelsen," she said to the sailor who was in charge of the shore expedition, "is Mr. Wynn aboard the yacht? I do not see his flag."

"No'm," replied Nelsen. Madeline, a gleam of satisfaction in her dark face, looked at me.

"I think you will want to wait for Mr. Wynn, will you not, Barbara?"

"Yes," I cried indignantly, stepping back upon the water-logged steps. "What made you say that papa had gone aboard, Mr. Delaney?" I demanded.

"Miss Royle knows why," he answered, with unembarrassed good humor. "I did it in order to decoy two lovely girls out upon the vessel, to assume command in spite of captain and crew, and to sail away with them to an uncharted island, there to keep them in durance until they had both consented to marry me—or something of that sort!

I told you your father had already gone aboard, Miss Wynn, as the first step in a terrific, blood-curdling sea-highwayman drama! Miss Royle knows that. Don't ask me."

In spite of myself, I couldn't help laughing. But Madeline faced him with furious anger.

"It sounds very amusing and absurd, Mr. Delaney," she said. "But in so far as it means that I distrust your purposes, you are quite right!" She delivered her declaration of war in a steady voice, with steady eyes fixed on him.

"I think we understand each other, Miss Royle," he replied good-naturedly, indifferently. "Not entirely, of course, but in our mutual attitude! Really, Miss Barbara"—he used my name again with the easy air of long usage—"the reason why I told you that Mr. Wynn had gone aboard was because he told me he was going aboard, and I took him at his word. But let us stroll back to the entrance and wait for him."

We went back. I was still unsettled. Of course, Madeline had been absurd to imply that he had had any ulterior purpose in inducing us to go upon the yacht before my stepfather! Of course! And he, perhaps, had, had the right to mock her perfectly palpable suspicions of him with all sorts of grotesqueries—but why had he lied? Why did he wish us to go aboard first? Or was his second, serious statement true? Had he believed Mr. Wynn already aboard?

We waited an hour, two hours. I grew more and more uneasy. Finally we went up to one of the hotels in the town, and Mr. Delaney, apparently as worried as we were, left us in the waiting room while he went out to make a search for papa. The men at the pier had been instructed to bring us word as soon as he appeared. The day waned. There was no word from him. At last, at about seven o'clock in the evening, Nelsen came hurrying after us. Mr.

Wynn had come to the pier, and had insisted upon being put aboard the yacht without waiting for us. He feared that Mr. Wynn was not quite—not quite well. He, Nelsen, sent the gig out with the two men who were waiting with him, and he himself had hurried back to tell us. He thought it would perhaps be as well if we hired a rowboat to take us out immediately. For Mr. Wynn was, he was afraid, not quite well.

We went in a subdued state of mind. And when we reached the *Flora-dan*, I perceived that Nelsen had employed a euphemism in his description of my stepfather. Mr. Wynn was extremely drunk. He, the most ascetically abstemious of men, was drunk—excitedly, unrepentantly, violently drunk. He greeted Madeline and me with an overaccentuated and elaborate courtesy, but he glared forbiddingly upon James Delaney.

"Don't you come aboard!" he cried threateningly. "If you do, I'll throw you overboard."

"You're drunk, Wynn," said Delaney, with contempt. "Don't make a scene before the young ladies, here. You're drunk——"

"Drunk or sober, I tell you not to try to set foot on this schooner," cried my guardian, very close to his guest, and very threatening. "I'll throw you overboard if you do!"

"Throw me overboard and you'll go down with me—do you understand that?" cried Delaney, with an ugly threat in his voice and eyes. "Pull yourself together, Wynn. This is disgraceful——"

"Papa! Papa!" I cried. "Let Mr. Delaney come aboard. This is dreadful! You asked him, you know!"

"Asked him? It wasn't necessary, Barbara, my dear. He said he was coming. I was too conventional to refuse him at the time. But conventionality no longer rules me——"

"Rum rules you, you idiot!" cried

Delaney at last, in genuine anger, for papa's maneuvers had indeed kept him from setting foot on the *Flora-dan*, and the undignified game of balance-advance-balance-retreat in the bottom of the rowboat was beginning to get on his nerves.

"Rum or religion or reason," stated papa, with sonorous alliteration, "whatever rules me now, I abide by its rulings, and so shall you! Nelsen——"

"Yes, sir," said the attentive Nelsen from his shoulder.

"Throw that fellow off if he doesn't go back immediately to the shore."

"Yes, sir," said Nelsen gravely, readily, and competently.

And in spite of the wild absurdity of the situation, James Delaney was actually forced to leave the *Flora-dan* and to return to the shore. I murmured apologies, Madeline watched the scene with a grim and not at all shocked attention. After Delaney had seen the inevitability of yielding unless he meant to provoke a really ugly situation, he shrugged his shoulders.

"It's terrible what drink does to these total abstainers, once they let themselves go!" he said. "But there's no accounting for a drunken man's vagaries. I give in. I've seen too many varieties of the alcoholic madman to try conclusions with one where there are ladies present! He'll probably have forgotten all about this by morning. Don't let it worry you, Miss Barbara. I'm sorry we're not to have these white moonlight nights together—but perhaps we shall, even yet! You'll hardly weigh anchor to-night, and he may be in his right mind by morning. Good night, Wynn! I wish you joy of your jag. Good night, Miss Royle. Good night, Barbara."

My stepfather, with an expression of intoxicated cunning, watched the rowers back away from the *Flora-dan*, watched the play of their blades turning the little boat toward shore, watched the gradual disappearance of the craft.

Then he turned to us. He seemed to have a realization of his condition. He spoke thickly.

"Pologize, girls," he said, and demanded his skipper. When he was joined by that personage, he gave some quick, sharp commands, and when Madeline and I were at dinner—alone, for Mr. Wynn pleaded a headache and went at once to his cabin—we heard the throb of the machinery as the little yacht made ready to steam away. By morning we were far out of sight of Kingston harbor; and for two months more we cruised, touching at almost no ports, seeing no compatriots.

Then, almost as suddenly as he had decided to sail, papa decided to return home. One April morning saw us debarking at New London. Tommy was there—to meet Madeline. She, poor girl, was almost tearfully glad to see once more a member of her sane, whole-hearted, affectionate household! She had found the last two months, I knew, trying ones. For, in spite of his best efforts to resume the manner of the charming and attentive host he had been at first, papa had been, during the latter part of our voyage, obviously absorbed in dismal thoughts.

He had, as James Delaney had prophesied, appeared to be entirely ignorant of his intoxication when the next day had dawned and found us far from Kingston. He had not apologized for it; he had asked no questions as to how we happened to be sailing once more. He had never even inquired concerning the valises in one of the cabins, with the black "J. D." across their ends. But, although he was unaware, as far as we could tell, of the incident that had interrupted our voyage and had changed its spirit, he was no longer what he had been before the episode.

He had tried, with a rather painful conscientiousness, to be entertaining, to talk, to laugh, to be a free man again; but his attention had wandered con-

stantly from the task. Sometimes he would pause in the middle of a sentence and sit staring out to sea with troubled eyes. Sometimes he would fix his gaze upon the horizon with a look of almost anguished dread. He spent much time alone in his stateroom, and even when he was out on deck, he sat with the visor of his cap pulled down so that we could not see his eyes.

We used to pretend to each other that we believed him asleep, but I know that neither of us believed any such thing. We knew that some wretchedness was preying upon him; I used shudderingly to ask myself if it were remorse. And so I, clouded by the cloud that encompassed him, the victim of my recollections and misgivings, had not been a much cheerfuller companion for poor Madeline than papa himself. No wonder she flung herself upon Tommy with such abandon! Indeed, he looked so stalwart and reliable, so altogether comfortable and comforting, that I had some ado to keep from following her example.

One of papa's cars had met us, to drive us to Hartford. In spite of the sweet spring freshness of the drive, in spite of the burgeoning green and lilac of the bushes against the silvery-shingled old country houses, it seemed to me that with each revolution of the big tires toward the place of his abode, my stepfather became more and more oppressed. Tommy and Madeline babbled on about the rest of their family, and I contributed to their talk what I could—I had only half a mind to it. I, too, was oppressed as I drew nearer home. Well, I had never felt much gayety or freedom in the stately dwelling of my stepfather. It seemed inhibited, in some queer way, against joy and liberty.

Madeline and Tommy were to spend the night with us before going down to New York. Mrs. Wheelwright was at home; she and sister Nancy had quar-

reled in six weeks, and the winter had been a nightmare to her. She had the austere, handsome rooms bright with flowers and fires, and she was pathetically glad to see us.

"It has seemed such an age you were gone, my dear!" she told me, clinging to me. "I have been so lost without you! It never blew in the night without my being sure you were in a shipwreck. I don't like travel by water myself when it can be avoided. Of course, when one goes to Europe, one must cross the water—but to tempt Providence unnecessarily, it's foolish. I felt better after that strange Mr. Delaney of yours, Cousin Lester, told me about how well and jolly you all were at Kingston. Wasn't it funny, your running across each other there? It's queer nothing like that ever happened during the years he was—what was he? Lost? Missing? You'd think you would have been sure to run against him some time in all that time."

"So Mr. Delaney has been here?" said papa. He spoke quietly, without apparent recollection of the night at Kingston.

"Every week lately," replied Mrs. Wheelwright happily. "He's been lovely! So kind and attentive to an elderly woman! He may be a little rough, Cousin Lester, but he has a heart of gold."

"Has he?" inquired Cousin Lester, with a marked absence of cordiality, even of interest. Tommy grinned sympathetically. He had glowered a little at Mrs. Wheelwright's tale of Delaney's assiduity.

"By the way, Mr. Wynn," he said, "there's some news from Leominster—not much, but I think they regard it as conclusive up there."

Papa looked at him inquiringly. So did the rest of us.

"The prosecuting attorney sent the information to Mr. Blake, and I happened to see Blake at the club the other

afternoon," Tommy explained, "and he mentioned it to me. The new gardener, in digging over the beds in Carl's chrysanthemum house, found, buried in the soil, a Smith & Wesson revolver, caliber forty-five, with one exploded cartridge."

"In Carl's chrysanthemum house!" we exclaimed, in unison—that is, we women did. I think that my guardian said nothing at all, but continued to look at Tommy with a waiting look.

"Yes. And they have adopted the theory—of course, it's merely a matter for academic interest now"—he stumbled—"of course, they had given up all active search long ago, and had labeled the count's death one of the unsolved, unsolvable mysteries—"

"Oh, no, they hadn't, Tommy!" remarked my guardian tranquilly. "They still had their sleuths out after Barbara, here, and me. I was aware of it. However, you say that now—"

"Detectives on my track!" I cried, bewildered.

"Well," said Tommy, not combating this wild notion of papa's, "of course, the theory is now—Barbara, it sounds brutal to say it, but—well, I can't help their theories, you know, and you want to hear the conclusion of the whole sad affair. The theory is now that he—Count Antonio—oh, Cardoni, whatever you call him!—had an affair with Felicity, your housemaid; that he returned to Twisted Trees that night for the purpose of speaking with her, of meeting her—you see, sir, your forbidding him the house that afternoon would make it impossible for him to manage a casual meeting with her; that Carl learned of the business, crept out upon them, and killed the count; that Felicity ran away to avoid being a witness against her husband; and that remorse and fear and loneliness and his native tendency to melancholy and violence finished for Carl. I'm awfully sorry, Bab."

I sat quite still in the long drawing-

room in which we were talking. An affair with a servant! I could not make myself grasp it. I heard it remotely, impersonally. I was conscious of no sensation but that the heat and light upon my face were unbearable! I leaned forward to adjust the glass fire screen. The housemaid's lover! Yet why not? What had he been, after all? An impostor, a menial in masquerade.

"Poor Carl!" said my guardian reflectively. "Poor oaf! With that burden to carry! Let us see—how long did he bear his ghost, if ghost it were that drove him to his end? Not more than a few weeks, was it?"

"Long enough, I call it!" cried Madeline vivaciously. She had moved nearer me and had given my arm an affectionate pressure. Now she rattled on, to give me time to digest my new morsel of shame and bitterness: "How a person can go on living year after year, with a great crime on his conscience, I do not see. My imagination balks at the thought of what torture, what a studied hypocrisy, the life of such a one must be. Yet, of course, the world must be full of undetected, unrepentant criminals—murderers and all sorts. What a grisly life it must be! Don't you really think, Mr. Wynn, that after a man has gone to bed every night for years with the knowledge that he has killed some one and has escaped detection, it must be a relief when finally a policeman taps him on the shoulder and tells him to come along—they've got the goods on him?"

"Fie, fie, Maddy! To be using slang after weeks of communication with pure English!" Tommy scolded her.

They made their talk, I knew, to save me from the acuter, more realizing pangs of mortification, to give me time to recover myself. But there was in me, in those days, a spirit of perversity; I resented pity, I resented thoughtfulness. I did not wish to be reminded of my mistakes by the elaborate way in

which other people helped me to ignore them. So I spoke at last.

"Poor, poor Tony!" I said. They started, but I meant it. I felt a pity for him—even if he had been a masquerading courier, even if he had sought his proper level in a liaison with my housemaid rather than in an alliance with me. And yet I couldn't altogether believe it. Tony had been a man of wit, a man of lively appreciations, a man of taste—yes, I would maintain that in the face of everything! He had a range of interests and information—and of talents, too—that made most men of my acquaintance seem boys or boors, after him. How could such a one, and with so much at stake, find amusement in the society of a Felicity Borkvist, however pretty?

Then I recalled Felicity, loitering near the library door that overclouded September afternoon. Ah, well! I would do better to do as the authorities at Leominster had done—adopt a theory that many of the known facts seemed to warrant, call off the sleuths of my mind, and turn to the next matter of existence. I shrugged my shoulders, banished my reflections, banished even my annoyance with Tommy and Madeline for being so divinely kind to me, and turned to listen to what papa was saying to Madeline about the sufferings of the undetected criminal. He was laughing gently at her views.

"But, don't you see, Madeline," he said, "that if he were such a tender-hearted, conscientious criminal to begin with, he probably wouldn't have committed the crime? Of course, I suppose there are some supersensitive souls who become quite melancholiac under the weight of their sins, and there are some dull, sluggish natures to whom a crime may prove the final darkening of the world—like our poor Carl. But I think that your average criminal has a pretty robust soul. I don't think that your average murderer sees ghosts."

"You are right there, Mr. Wynn," said a pleasant voice from the doorway.

We all turned, with a start, in that direction, though we all knew, from the tones, who it was we should see. James Delaney, pulling off his gloves with

we did not have the pleasure of Miss Royle's society."

If he had been expected, invited, awaited with eagerness, he could not have acted with a cooler, a more thorough ease. And at the sight of him, my pulses began throbbing a little. The provocative gleam in his eyes, the air of challenge with which he encountered me, had as much to do with the emotion he awoke in me as the fact that he was inexplicable in his relation to our family. And that inexplicability roused in



One of the Indians swung about abruptly, throwing the procession out of order for an instant; he rode close to us, stared—rather at my companion than at me, I thought—and then resumed his place in the line.

an easy air, advanced toward us. "I speak," he said, "in my character of an average murderer. I've never seen a ghost yet. Remorse has never kept me from a night's sleep yet. Mrs. Wheelwright, you are happy at last, are you not? Miss Wynn—Miss Royle— Ah, Mr. Royle, too! It's quite like Leominster last fall, isn't it? Except that there

me a turbulent desire to find out for myself the secret of his power.

We mumbled out some greetings—that is, I did. Madeline, if it were allowable to say such a thing of a well-brought-up young woman, might be described as spitting out hers. Tommy spoke his clearly, courteously; Mrs. Wheelwright purred hers; and my

guardian—how did he give his? With coolness, at any rate. If there had been a spark shot out of his eyes at the unexpected appearance of the man whom I perceived to be his tormentor, it faded before it was necessary for him to speak. When he spoke, it was with sufficient civility.

"Mrs. Wheelwright and I have been keeping each other company," Delaney announced, as he accepted Mr. Wynn's invitation to draw a chair to the fire. "And she was good enough to tell me yesterday that she expected you to-day. Which is why I am here—not too soon, I hope?"

"In your character of average murderer?" I questioned his entrance speech. "Please elucidate."

"Does it need elucidation?" he asked, his eyes upon me with a daring expression of pleasure.

His look, in another way than Tony's, always gave me the same sensation—a belief in my beauty. I do not mean to claim great loveliness, though I was well enough looking; but I mean that the open admiration of both of these men meant that they perceived it, such as it was, and were swayed by its power. Tony had made me feel it somewhat in the style of a tournament queen of love and beauty—an artificial character, playing an exquisite game; and James Delaney made me feel as if I had the quality to attract primeval man. If a personable cave man had looked at me so, I should have kindled in the same way. I felt all this, without defining it, as he stared at me, putting his question.

"I merely said," he went on, "that I had lost no sleep over my homicides."

"Plural!" I exclaimed. "Have you many to your credit?"

"I don't want to boast," he answered.

"No, but really, Mr. Delaney," begged Mrs. Wheelwright, torn between fascination and horror at the idea, "but truly—you never killed any one, did you?"

"Never, except when it has seemed

necessary," he replied. "Never, except in what I called self-defense. But I can see that I am not winning out with Miss Royle by these recollections. Let us talk of something else. Have you had a pleasant cruise since Kingston?"

"By the way, Delaney," said papa, in the most matter-of-fact manner, "we've brought two valises of yours up from the *Flora-dan*. You had better tell me now where you are staying, and I will have them sent around at once."

There was not a note of apology, not a hint of embarrassment in his voice or manner. Delaney looked a little surprised for a moment. Then he laughed, a sort of inward laugh, and mentioned the name of the hotel where he was staying. But Tommy sat glaring.

"You were on the cruise as far as Kingston, then?" he demanded. It seemed a reasonable enough supposition, in view of Mr. Delaney's luggage.

"No," answered he. "I was going to board her at Kingston, but—er—I was prevented."

"Oh!" said Tommy blankly, and looked meditatively at me.

The results of his meditation were, I think, unfortunate for both of us. He detailed them to me later in the day, when Mr. Delaney and papa had withdrawn to consult over that interminable business of theirs, when Mrs. Wheelwright had melted away, and Madeline had discreetly gone to lie down, leaving her brother and me alone together.

"Barbara," said Tommy at this exempt hour, "I've been thinking a great deal about you." Tommy was looking straight at me with honest, kind eyes that never made me think of my beauty and its power.

"That's sweet of you, Tommy," I replied—sincerely, too, and with a real gush of gratitude.

"Yes," continued Tommy, "especially since I've seen that gilded-statue person——"

"That what?"

"That gilded-statue person—chiseled features, gold hair, gold beard—all that," explained Tommy. "Ever since I've seen him with his eyes fixed on you, Barb, you need some one to look out for you, if ever a girl did."

"And you don't think papa and Mrs. Wheelwright adequate to the task?" I inquired.

My delicate suggestion that he should mind his own business was lost on Mr. Royle.

"Your father doesn't even see you; he's seeing something else—I don't know what. And Mrs. Wheelwright—ask if a nice feather bed is equal to the task of looking out for a young skylark, a young April wind! No, Barbara, you need—now don't misunderstand me and go flying off the handle"—he interrupted himself to adjure me earnestly—"a husband."

"A husband?" I was a little enraged with Tommy for suddenly returning to the ranks of the suitors. Hadn't he assured me that he didn't love me? Besides, wasn't it almost indecent to be talking to me of husbands—to me, with Tony so short a time away from my world?

"Yes, a husband." Tommy was very firm about it. "I am not speaking for myself. I—— If I knew any one else whom I could trust with the business, I'd not ask you to marry me, Barbara—I'd ask you to marry him. But I don't know any one else who would do. Almost any one else," pursued Tommy thoughtfully, "would be likely to begin by falling heels over head in love with you, and wanting to do as you pleased, and all that. But I've been through that stage, and——"

"Are you asking me to marry you?" I interrupted him, somewhat abruptly.

"Well, yes—or, at any rate, I'm going to. What did you think I was doing?"

"Delivering a monologue," I replied smartly. "But——"

"Now don't refuse me until you've

heard me out," begged Tommy. "Or, at any rate, until you've let me propose. You see, Barb, there's something about you that attracts undesirables——"

"Meaning yourself?"

"No, meaning others. Oh, Barbara, my dear, let me take care of you! You're such a pretty, eager, little thing—you're such a bright little flame, a-blow in the wind! And then you're quite a little heiress, you know. You've got too much money to be drifting around for fortune hunters to have a try at, every now and then. Come on, my dear, marry me and be safe."

"You and Madeline seem infatuated with the notion of safety," I complained. "It's only a little while since I was telling her that safety had never been my ideal of the highest earthly happiness, even if I were sure where safety lay. So, Tommy, though it's awfully kind of you to want to save me from the undesirables—the fortune hunters——"

I paused a moment to let my words sink in. Tommy flushed.

"You mean that I'm as poor as a church mouse?" he cried. "Of course I am! But you know as well as I do that I don't want your beastly money—you know that as well as I do, Barbara Wynn! And it's useless to pretend that you don't. I ask you to marry me without the slightest fear that you can misunderstand me in that way."

"Oh, Tommy, Tommy, I don't misunderstand! And I was only trying to tease you. It was horrid of me, and I'm truly ashamed."

"Don't apologize—don't dignify the unthinkable supposition with an apology. But come back to the main issue. Will you marry me, Barbara, and let me take care of you?"

"Tommy, you know I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't love you—in that way."

"Were you always so scrupulous

about not promising to marry where you did not love?" he reproached me.

He put the question rather quietly, and it gave me a moment's pause. Why had I been willing to marry Antonio without loving him? Oh, because he had represented distinction, as I had thought, and brilliance. But it was not because Tommy, in his present estate, did not offer those lures that I could not marry him without love; I realized it suddenly. It was because he demanded better things of me than Tony demanded; it was because my feeling for him, such as it was, would not let me cheat him, and I knew that Tommy Royle would be cheated if his wife did not love him. There are plenty of men who are not wronged by a cold wife, but Tommy was not one of these. I didn't think it all out consciously then, though I am sure that the conclusions were all in my mind. I only said awkwardly:

"I couldn't do it, Tommy, because you are too nice, and because I like you too well."

He looked at me for a long minute, with a strange deepening of the expression in his eyes. His look began to give me a queer, faint sensation—I felt almost as if Tommy were coming close to me, were going to infold me in his arms, were going to kiss me. But he did nothing of the sort. Instead, he only said, with a little, breathless catch in his voice:

"Oh, Barbara, you child! But you will grow up—you are growing up—and what a woman you are going to be!"

I felt flattered, though I didn't quite see on what Tommy based his prophetic rhapsody. Nevertheless, of course, I agreed with him!

Well, that was over. Tommy had proposed again—proposed with considerably less sentiment than on the former occasion when he "had done me the honor." And yet I was more stirred by him, than I had been by the boyish ar-

dor, the young demand, of a year and a half ago. Perhaps Tommy was growing up, too, and was going to be something of a man when he was through with the process!

CHAPTER V.

In spite of Tommy's hopes of me, I was not yet sufficiently mature to deny myself the dangerous pleasure of coquetting with unfamiliar inflammables, of trying to balance upon the edge of unknown precipices. When Madeline and Tommy went on to New York the next day, I was at a loss for occupation. I had been out of life for nearly a year. The months of my engagement to Tony had divorced me from the familiar, everyday interests of my little world almost as completely as had the tragedy that had terminated the engagement. During my betrothal, I had been gradually weaning myself from the society in which I had been reared, and had, in imagination, been fitting myself into a more glittering one. The process is one of extreme withdrawal, so that it is not strange that I was somewhat empty of resource in the first days of my return to Hartford after the cruise.

People poured in to see me, of course; the girls and women whom I knew called me on the telephone, invited me to join them in all their activities. But it was all done with a little air that rankled. Some of them were patronizing to the dupe; some of them pitifully sympathetic with the heroine of tragic loss; some were inclined to think the occasion opportune to give me veiled advice about ambition and the vanities of the world. Naturally, they all irritated and irked me. And—perhaps naturally, too, considering the affinity that flame and tow always have for each other—I began to solace myself with the flirtation with James Delaney that had been on the books as inevitable ever since we had met.

It is with some shame that I write of this period of my life, this phase of my emotions. But it all, I suppose, had a bearing on the events in which we presently found ourselves involved. I suppose that if he had not found me tempting, James Delaney would soon have shaken the dust of Hartford Town from his feet, would have searched for livelier adventure elsewhere. Not even money would have induced him to stay; not even, I think, the perverse imp in him which delighted in tormenting my guardian, who palpably did not desire his presence. But I was as I was, and he stayed on—to woo me.

His wooing was not conducted like any of those in which I had hitherto borne my part. He did not compliment me, as Tony had been wont to do. He did not declare himself my slave—very far from it! He proclaimed himself my master, and I, half amused, half frightened, half rebellious, half yielding, let him assume a good deal.

The first time he proposed to me, if proposal it were, was when we were motoring together out near Farmington. He drove the car himself—it was a big, beautiful French thing, ivory white within and without. He drove always with the same air of reckless force with which he did all things. The country had whirled past us. I had been breathless, almost frightened.

"You know," I gasped, "we'll be arrested, if we aren't killed!"

"I shouldn't mind dying with you," he answered.

"But consider my preferences, please!"

"Oh, the time will come when you will feel the same way!" he retorted, with careless conviction.

"Well, at least you'll wait until then before killing us, will you not?"

He slowed down a little, and we rolled smoothly and silently along. The car was a beauty—velvety in her glid-

ing, even when she was driven at high speed.

"When are you going to marry me?" he asked, after we had been running a little way at a rational speed.

"Never!" I replied.

"Oh; yes, you are! The only question is, when? It might as well be soon."

"You have an amazing impudence," I told him.

"That's what you find irresistible in me," was his calm acceptance of my criticism. "If I were a tame cat, you would have no more use for me than you have for all the excellent young men who belong to that class and who filled your program at the *débutantes'* Easter dance, where, of course, your dear sisters thought you ought not to be!"

"You weren't there," I mentioned.

"No, but I know exactly how it proceeded. And you were more interested in the fact that I was not there than you were interested in the fact that any other man was—which is what I wanted to achieve."

"You're frank to expose your methods so."

"I'm not a woman, Barbara, my dear, and it's not necessary for me to use guile to obtain my ends. I can always force them, and so I don't have to practice dissimulation. But it's not worth while to discuss anything but the main question: When do you think you'll marry me?"

"As I told you before, never! You see, I don't happen to be in love with you—"

"What do you call it?" he asked daringly, leaning nearer to me and gazing into my eyes with a mixture of raillery and command—to the imminent danger of our lives.

"For Heaven's sake, be careful!" I snapped. "When you're running a sixty-horse-power car, don't try to flirt! The two things can't be done at once."

"How little you know!" he answered. "Suppose I should tell you that we were going to drive absolutely recklessly and regardlessly through the country until you gave me your word to be married at the first church or town hall we came to—how would you like that?"

I looked at him askance. He was capable of that or of any other devilry!

"I'd promise, of course," I replied, "and when we stood before the clergyman, or the town clerk, or whoever it happened to be, I'd say, 'No, no, no!' And I'd tell him why. I'd describe the coercion to him, and then where would you be?"

"You little vixen! I almost believe you'd do it!"

"Certainly you don't seriously suppose that I would allow you to frighten me into marrying you?"

"No, you aren't going to marry me because you're afraid of me—at any rate, that isn't going to be the primary reason—but because you want to marry me—fiercely, as I want to marry you! And when we are married, do you know what is going to happen to you? You are going to be snatched away from all this suffocation of brownstone and servants and coupons and dressmakers and dances in which you live—you're going to be carried away from it all as fast as I can carry you! There's a camp—the eternal snows above it, the mighty mountains all around it—fifty miles—seventy miles—from a neighbor! And there we shall go for our honeymoon. You've never seen moonlight yet, Barbara. Wait until you see it on the peaks and the sharp points of the pines out there! Wait until you catch your own trout from a steel-bright, steel-cold mountain brook! Wait until you kill your own venison! Wait until you see no other human being but me for weeks—months! Wait until you hear the coyotes howling at night!"

"I shouldn't care for it at all," I prevaricated. "I hate 'roughing it.'"

"You won't hate roughing it with your man," he answered briefly.

I thought it best to cure him of this obsession at once.

"Truly, Mr. Delaney," I said formally, "I can't have you talking to me in this style. I mean what I say. I'm not in love with you. And if I were, I should think twice before marrying you—you, with your record, or your lack of one! And even if I were in love with you, and were willing to overlook that career of yours, which you don't even take the trouble to make creditable, do you think for a second that papa would permit it? You forget that he has always been a proud man and an ambitious man, and he regards me as his own daughter. He would never allow such a marriage."

"How little you know your proud, ambitious relative—who was willing to pass you over to a small, bogus count!" he scoffed. "He'll beg you to marry me within a fortnight!"

I threw back my head and laughed. The idea was too comical. Was this man beside me insane on the subject of his power, that he should make such an assertion? He boasted that he would make me love him, but, after all, that was but the allowable bombast of the lover or the player at love. It was another matter to say that he would bend papa to his will—papa, who obviously disliked him.

"Funny, isn't it?" he said. "But, by the Lord Harry, he shall plead my cause for me to-night!" His voice was menacing.

"It will be quite in vain," I said, chilled suddenly, and anxious only that the thing should not be brought to a test between them.

"At least it will teach you that I am able to do what I promise to do," he retorted, and we rode on in silence. The glow and exhilaration of the game of strength in which we were engaged faded from me; I was suddenly face to

face again with mysteries, doubts, even vague terrors.

To think that he should thus blatantly boast of his control over papa—papa, who shunned him, papa, whom he had driven to the only intoxication I had ever heard of in his career—or was it only to a simulation of drunkenness as an excuse for rudeness? I had never been quite able to tell which; but whichever it was, it was surely an indication of a rooted antipathy.

As we came into the city, we were held up at a crossing by the passage of a procession. At first I thought it a circus parade. There were chariots and riders such as I connected in my recollection with circuses. Then I perceived from the banners that it was some secondary "wild-West" show. There were cowboys delighting the street urchins by their spectacular management of bucking cow ponies; there were Indians riding in single file, straight and scornful, vouchsafing no glance to the right or left.

We ourselves were, I think, a little spectacular for the neighborhood in which we found ourselves. The superb, ivory-white car would have commanded attention anywhere, and, of course, much more in a dingy region of tenements and railroad tracks. James Delaney was a figure always to win a second glance, with his great stature, his wonderful coloring; while I was rather more conspicuous than usual that day, thanks to a veil I had wound about my motor cap—a veil of the newest and most violent color—crimson-plum, I think they had called it at the shop where I bought it—streaming a yard behind me like a banner. We vied with the Western parade in exciting attention.

Suddenly we did more than that. One of the Indians who had cast an occasional scornful glance to the sidewalks now and then, suddenly fixed his eyes, beneath his plastered black hair, upon

us. He was passing when he caught sight of us. He swung about abruptly, throwing the procession out of order for an instant; he rode close to us, stared—rather at my companion than at me, I thought—and then resumed his place in the line.

"A friend from your mountaintop?" I inquired lightly.

But Delaney was staring after the procession, a frown upon his forehead.

"Now where have I seen that red face before?" he pondered. "For I have seen him—and he's seen me, if I am any judge of expressions. I should also say he hadn't loved me."

"Do you know many Indians?" I asked him, idly enough.

"Enough," was the laconic response. Then he grew more discursive. "But I have only one violent enemy among them—and that was not he! My friend has lost an eye. When you come out there with me, there is nothing you will miss seeing," he vaunted his ability. "I've been everywhere. I'll show you the cliff dwellers of the Southwest and the tepees of the Alaskans. I'll take you to an outlaw camp. Oh, yes, my dear! I do number outlaws among my friends. Would you be shocked past recovery to hear that I had helped hold up more than one train?" He beamed pleasantly upon me, like a person admitting some unusual accomplishment. "For I have, my fair dove, my fond dove!"

"I hope that you were caught and properly punished, then," I replied, with acrid virtue. I really wanted to ask him about his exploits, but I felt that I must not until I had first rebuked him.

"As a matter of fact, I did stand trial for one holdup," he answered amiably, as another man might have mentioned visiting Niagara Falls. "But they couldn't prove anything on any of us—we had an unbreakable alibi that time. It was a great life, Barbara. You've a streak of lawlessness in you that would respond to its charm."

"Of course, I don't believe a word you're saying," I retorted, and with some truth. "You're merely trying to astonish me."

"It's all true, notwithstanding your polite skepticism. When I come to die, my dear young friend, I shall have no whine to put up before the Throne because I haven't lived sufficiently."

"Will you tell me one thing?" I asked him suddenly and abruptly. We were motoring again, but slowly, with due regard to the crowded streets.

"Anything in the world," he assured me obligingly.

"Why didn't you come home long ago to claim your inheritance?"

He hesitated, looked at me with amused eyes, seemed to debate whether or not he would answer truthfully or with a gibe, and then said, as if he had decided upon the truth:

"It's such a simple explanation I wonder you have never thought of it. And I wonder especially that Mr. Wynn never mentioned it. It's getting to be a commonplace nowadays—the loss of identity through illness."

"Oh!" I breathed. "Oh! So that was it!—How simple! But when did you recover? And do you remember all the things that you did and all the persons you were during your loss of identity?"

"That's one of the wonderful things about my case," he told me soberly. "That's what would make it so interesting to psychological pathologists if I should tell them about it. I remember all that happened to me in the past twelve years, and now I have added to that all that happened to me before. You see it was no idle boast I made when I said that I could not reproach my Creator with having denied me plenty of life."

"But you haven't told me yet," I insisted, "just when it was that you recovered, just when you knew yourself for

James Delaney, and realized you had a fortune waiting for you back East."

"Oh, it was only a little while before the afternoon I showed up at Twisted Trees. Some time I'll tell you all about it. I believe you're half skeptical about it yet. You shouldn't allow that cynical, disbelieving spirit to grow—it isn't pretty in young ladies. Faith is one of their sweetest charms! And doubt in this case is especially impertinent to your father, whose masculine intellect has been perfectly satisfied by my explanations and my proofs!"

As usual, there was the note of mockery in his voice. As usual, he left me with the baffled sense of living in the midst of unrealities, with the excited desire to try to solve the riddle. We had entered the drive across our lawn, and in an instant he was helping me alight before the tiresome brownstone steps of the tiresome, self-satisfied, brownstone house. Very unlike the mountain camp he had sketched for me.

"It's a long way from here to my mountaintop," he said, as if reading my mind. The door was opening before me at the touch of the servitor within. "I think you'll like the mountaintop better—for a time, anyway," he added.

There was no opportunity to rebuke him, to contradict that impertinent assumption of his, to do the act that Sara Nulty would have described as "putting him in his place." For the door was opened, and the wooden-looking man in papa's plum-colored livery stood at attention. I was not particularly conventional, but it did not seem to me desirable to admit him to my confidence. So I merely tried to put a great deal of scornful, rebellious meaning into my farewell to James Delaney as I went into the house.

Later in the afternoon, I was having tea with a group of girls in the drawing-room, when I thought I saw him in the hall. If it were he, he was immediately admitted to my guardian's study, and I

saw no more of him that day. But I heard of him. We were dining out, both papa and I, that evening. His was a dinner of the board of trade to some distinguished foreign financier; mine was a little, intimate affair at Viola Kingston's. Papa was to call for me with the car about half past ten. —

The dinner had seemed to me rather tame after the excitement of the afternoon. The Trinity College seniors between whom I sat were very mild excitement, very small game indeed, after the society of the gentleman who had boasted, in the most pleasantly cultivated of accents, of being a Western holdup man. They were, moreover, both a little afraid of me—my reputation as a heroine of tragedy made them a little doubtful about how to treat me. So they tried treating me somewhat as if I had been a bereaved grandmother. Altogether, the evening was not successful from my point of view, and I was glad when Mrs. Kingston interrupted the singing of college songs after dinner by the announcement that my father was waiting, and would not come in if I was quite ready to go home.

We exchanged a few dull banalities

on the drive home; we spoke of the weather, we told each other about our respective dinners, and then we fell silent. I wanted to talk about James Delaney—I wanted to ask questions about him, to discover just how much my stepfather knew of the picturesque outlawry of his Western days. But I did not dare to introduce his name.

"Barbara, my dear," began my guardian, as we entered the hall, "if you're not too tired, I should like to have a little talk with you in the study."

I remembered, with a sudden stoppage of the beating of my heart for a second, that it had been with just those words that he had called upon me, a year ago, to listen to the proposal of the count. My excitement at the recollection, my sudden inexplicable dread of what might be before me, kept me from answering for a moment. Papa caught at my silence with an air of eagerness.

"Perhaps you are too tired to-night?" he said hopefully.

"No," I answered, "I'm not tired at all. I'll come down just as soon as I've taken off my wraps and told Sara to go to bed."

"I'll be waiting for you."

TO BE CONTINUED.





The Spare Room

By Helen Baker Parker

Author of "The Golden Bowl," "Heart's Desire," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. EMMETT OWEN

RIVERVIEW is patrician south of the tracks and plebeian north of that line of social cleavage. Its Main Street begins in Lane's Pasture, where the Christian Endeavorers go on their annual picnics, and ends out there beyond the bridge in the white-fenced cemetery on the hill, where the aged journey to their long rest.

Just this side of the cemetery, where the street degenerates into a road leading to Edgewater, ten miles away, is the orphan asylum, a monument conceived at the eleventh hour by a certain rich man, who had made much money by the manufacture of orphans. His name is graven there over the door. If you are a visitor, you may pass beneath the marble slab that droops like a closing eyelid, and that cost five thousand. If you are an orphan, you go around, and mind you don't track mud!

During the erection of those monumental walls, the coming of the orphans had been dreaded in the town; they might be contaminating. But they are pitifully well behaved, and march in perfect order into the white church across from J. M. Slocum's general store. Because of them the Sunday school is the largest in the State, and because of that statistical triumph the State Sunday-school Convention came to Riverview. Moreover, by reason of the convention, not universally a vehicle of romance, Susan Crane opened the

locked drawer in the spare room of her life.

It was arranged that the south side should entertain the main speakers and their wives and a few rich laymen, who were interested in the movement, and that the other members—who, until such time as they could save up some money out of the high cost of living like other people, endured the ignominy of the far north—should entertain the residue. It was not planned in so many words. Such matters arrange themselves. A very competent committee on entertainment arranged for the care of two hundred delegates. Those whose homes were obviously too modest to invite strange delegates into were solicited for cream, mashed potatoes, cold meat, and other delicacies for the church supper to be given the last evening of the convention.

Miss Susan Crane, the last on the list, was asked for butter. Miss Crane is always the last on the list. She was the afterthought in the minds of the committee.

"Miss Crane? Miss Crane?" had queried one of the committee. "Oh, yes, that little woman in the old North place? Seamstress or something. I'll send Nita over in the car to ask her."

In the North place, a little cottage quite hidden in summer, even to the moss-grown roof, by a mass of lilacs, trumpet vine, roses, and wild grapes—

alone save for the company of Thomas, who monopolizes her best feather-stitched cushion—Miss Crane is remembered in emergencies.

Miss Crane is little, too—to match her house. She has abundant white hair parted as near the middle as a curly obstinacy will permit, a skin singularly pink and smooth, and patient, wistful eyes. For very best she wears a black cashmere, which she makes over when necessary. She makes no pretense at being fashionable, so there is nothing incongruous in the little sign that flaps noisily on windy nights: "Plain Sewing Neatly Done."

In the predestined scheme of the universe, Miss Crane is the one thought of at the last minute to help out. The graduation dress that cannot be finished at home, the black waist—with a bit of crape at the neck—needed in pitiful haste, children's underclothes—it is in the making of these that Miss Crane "supports" herself—ah, the pity of the word!—with a fine needle. And when she is not sewing, she is looking down the quiet village street—looking with patient eyes for what comes not.

When the orphans came to the town years ago, they marched onward from the station like little Christian soldiers, the solemn-faced, unkissed lady orphans leading, followed by the little gentlemen orphans—first among them the tiny, golden-haired one, who was having such a hard time to keep in line, but in whom it scarcely mattered, he was such a good adopter—and, bringing up the rear, the two boys who were nearly old enough to earn their own living, and who had learned long since not to be excited at sight of wistful-eyed women leaning from their carriages.

When they passed thus, by the little vine-covered cottage, Miss Crane experienced a never-to-be-forgotten moment, to be laid away along with other never-to-be-forgotten moments. She might have had a child like that little

girl with the brown hair flying—or that little tiny boy. Ah, how he clutched at one's heart!

After a sleepless night she put on her newly made-over black cashmere, went up over the hill, passed beneath the marble eyelid, and applied eagerly for the position of assistant matron.

Had she experience?

No; but she loved them!

The matter would be taken under consideration.

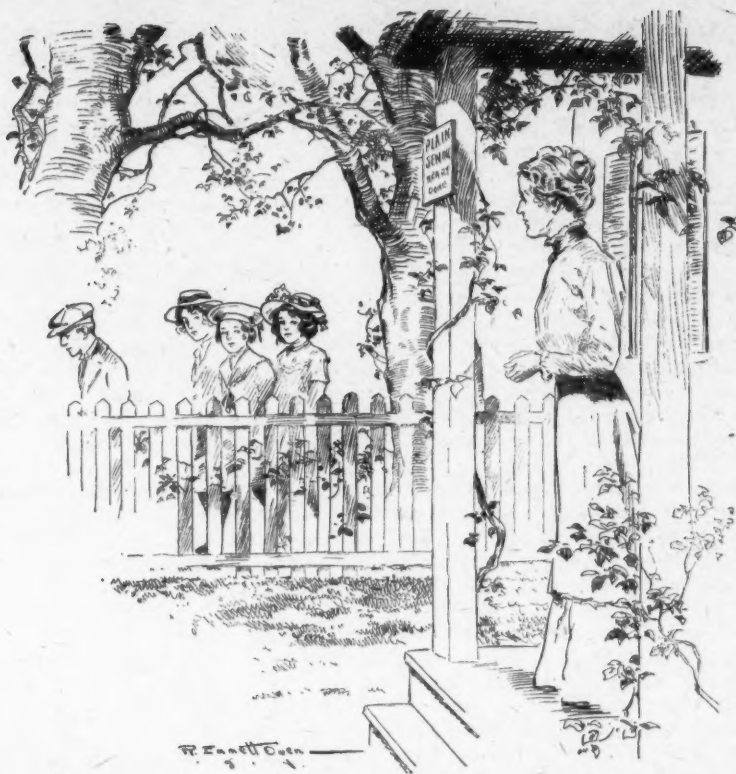
It was decided that she would be inefficient as an organizer and a disciplinarian. Had there not been too much sentiment in her statement that *she loved them*? But she might make their blouses—yes. Durable material and dark colors.

And so she makes the orphans' blouses. They see her sitting there by the window in her quaint, old-fashioned, faded dress that crosses over her bosom, revealing the white hollow at the base of her throat, a garment wonderfully soft to lean against.

They come morning, noon, and night to see if their blouses are done. They know about the jar on the pantry shelf that has in it cookies shaped like chickens. They pick flowers from the little round beds planted just for them. And they stroke the little plaster rabbit that is forever at attention under the elm tree. They come when they are hurt—to lean against her knees and be loved. One tiny one calls her "muvver." Such is the uneventful life of Miss Crane.

She promised the butter for the church supper, and then, the list of delegates growing daily, she promised to take a delegate—two, even. Women, of course!

Just about everything in the little house was turned outdoors and beaten and sunned. The old bureau was repaired—the old-fashioned mahogany bureau in the "spare room," in whose locked drawer were a picture, a bundle of letters, a pressed and faded flower,



When they passed thus, by the little vine-covered cottage, Miss Crane experienced a never-to-be-forgotten moment.

and a book with a leaf turned down. Miss Crane cleaned the attic, overhauling every trunk and unearthing many a reminder of her buried youth. She needed no reminder. She white-washed the cellar, put scalloped and fringed newspapers on the pantry shelves, polished the jelly glasses standing in a tempting row, and hung over the kitchen sink a new calendar, whereon a chorus girl danced untiringly every day in the year.

"When my delegates think of the convention," said Miss Crane, in her dusting cap, "they will think of the place

where they stayed, and they will always think of me and my house as we are these few days. Women remember things so!" And she kept on polishing.

The day of the convention came at last. The orphans who, when you come to think of it, were the cause of the convention, had new clothes; the boys wore new blouses and the little ladies wore new hats, all alike. Woolen tams are a bit warm by the middle of summer. At last, too, in the little north-side cottage, the veal loaf was made, all crusty and wrinkly on top. The pint jar of cooked salad dressing stood cool-

ing in the pantry, the devil's-food cake lay heavenly inviting beneath a thick layer of boiled icing, three kinds of pickles sent out a spicy odor, and the best little cups were on the table; women like these things.

Upstairs, in the spare room, Miss Crane made sure that the towels over the washstand hung with their monograms showing, as by accident. The crease in the snowy spread was exactly in the middle. The starched pillowshams, with crocheted lace in the pineapple pattern around the edge, bade one with concerted action "good night" and "good morning." Over the bed the Good Shepherd looked mildly down; while on the side wall, midway between the snowy-draped windows, Washington was at his unending task of crossing the Delaware, that chilly stream disappearing abruptly and without explanation behind a vanished acorn. The fat pincushion on the bureau held a hundred common pins arranged in a circle, and at each corner three safety pins invited one to defy the world. At the right and left of the pincushion, in maidenly symmetry, reposed comb and brush; while one forecorner of the bureau boasted a pair of embroidery scissors and the other a little hand glass, which was new.

Miss Crane was arranging a dainty spray of rose blossoms in a crystal vase on a table beside the bed when she heard the honking of Nita's car at the front gate, Nita's little feet running up the walk, Nita's voice humming her new Victor record air, "Nothing ever happens in our town! Nothing ever—" and Nita's excited young voice at the open door: "Miss Crane! Your women aren't coming, but *will you take a man?*"

Nita did not know whether she was answered or not. She gathered that she was invited to come in, and she sank wearily on the bottom step.

"Oh," she mourned, "I *am* so tired,

and all for nothing but a Sunday-school convention!" She threw one silk-shod, slit-displayed ankle over the other. "Oh, this town! Isn't it the deadeast! About as much romance as there is in the contribution box! I wouldn't stay here a minute if I had my way! Well, I've got to be going. Oh, did you say you would? I asked everybody else that I could think of first."

Miss Crane was too busy with thought to note the lack of tact. All her preparations had been for women.

"Just one?" she asked, pondering. "Why, yes, I think so. It's—it's hardly proper, though."

Nita at the foot of the stairs giggled with merriment. "Proper!" she laughed. "Proper! But here I'm sitting, and he'll be at the station in a minute, and it'll be just to dinner and over night and breakfast. I'm going after him now. Biggest one at the convention—everybody says the most eloquent. Speaks to-night. They didn't think till to-day that they could get him."

Nita tripped out of the door and down the walk, humming again: "Nothing ever happens in our town! Nothing ever happens—"

Miss Crane tiptoed back to the spare room and removed the safety pins. She went downstairs and put coffee cups in place of tea cups, and was standing, somewhat flustered, slicing potatoes thin, to fry German style, as men like them, when—he came.

She looked at him, looming large in her little doorway, looked, forgot to introduce herself, looked—and leaned for an instant, weakly, against the wall—the faint color receding from her cheeks, leaving her face pitifully old and gray. Women remember things so!

"Miss—Miss Lane? I believe I have the name right?" And he extended a large, warm hand.

"Miss—Miss Lane," she repeated, as if learning a lesson.



Afterward they walked home together under the starry sky.

He stooped a little in his loose-fitting preacher's coat. Over his high, white forehead, long iron-gray hair lay a little damp and glossy. His mouth in repose was that of an angry Puritan, but when he spoke, a smile came from somewhere and illumined his face; while always, behind thick, shining spectacles, his eyes gleamed kind, tender, even brooding.

After he had gone to church that night, she went like one walking in sleep to the spare room. On the bureau, leaning against the little locked drawer, was a picture—a woman, thin-lipped, querulous-eyed, fashionably gowned,

and a frail boy, image of his father. He did not lean against his mother as little boys in pictures usually do—indeed, those haughty shoulders seemed not to have been made for little heads. Miss Crane gazed and marveled. She had never heard of a minister's wife like that. She went to church and stole unobserved into a rear seat and heard him preach.

Afterward they walked home together under the starry sky. All along the village street the elm trees met above their path and shadowed it, save where the moonlight filtered through



He gazed for a long moment at her downcast face, opened his lips whence came no sound at all, and reached out to her a hand that trembled.

the blowing leaves and fashioned quivering arabesques. They came to the sign of the plaster rabbit and turned into the narrow gravel walk.

"The little rabbit!" he said musingly. "I used to have——"

"The children's rabbit," Miss Crane answered, "and the children's flower beds."

She stooped over a plant, putting out her hand to it tenderly. "The children's red geraniums will be out to-morrow."

She opened the door, and they went into the dimly lighted house.

"You do not lock your doors?"

"The children like to run in. When anything goes wrong, they always come—home——"

Standing at the foot of the stairs, she directed him to his room—the spare room with the old mahogany bureau and the locked drawer with the picture in it. At the top of the stairs he stumbled a little and looked down.

"The room with the light? I was thinking of something——"

"Yes, the room with the light."

She was shading the lamp with her slender, needle-pricked fingers. For the space of a moment, a mere heart-beat out of eternity, they stood looking at each other so.

He started to speak, but turned without finishing,

went into the lighted room, and closed the door softly behind him.

At breakfast he heard the children playing about the door. Was Miss Lane—that *was* the name? He sometimes misunderstood names—fond of children?

"Yes! Oh, yes!" She caught her breath, her hand at her breast. Of course, she told him, it wasn't like having them of one's very own! Sometimes she had thought of adopting one of the orphans. She made children's clothes, and they must always be tried

on—perhaps he didn't know how children outgrew things? They came, too, when they had no errand—they ran in on the way to school. They knew about the cooky jar on the low shelf in the pantry, and they picked flowers from the little round beds she planted just for them—had he noticed them?—petunias and nasturtiums and geraniums. And one of the little ones—called her—"muvver."

"Ah! How beautiful!"

"But how I go on about my—children! You must tell me about your wife. It is such a pity she could not have come."

"My wife"—one would have said there passed over his face a little spasm of pain as from a pin prick—"is a sort of—nervous invalid. I have a little boy."

"Ah! She suffers?"

"No, not at all. It is not that. She merely requires constant—care. That is why I am hurrying back."

Sunshine streamed in through the vine-framed—windows, and the breeze brought the odors of old-fashioned flowers, brought the song of birds, the faint sough of wind through whispering branches—odors and sounds that tugged at memory until it loosed its moorings and drifted out beyond the bar.

"Your minister here is a young man," he said, toying abstractedly with his coffee spoon. "Young men appeal to me. When I was his age, I was very ambitious. I came from a town near here—Edgewater. You know the place? I believed I had a great career before me. I went out into the world in search of it—and I—never—went back."

There was silence between them. Without, there sounded a few bird notes of piercing sweetness, the mating call.

"There are things," he said, looking off with farseeing eyes and nodding gravely, "there are things that are bet-

ter than a fulfilled ambition, and success may be wormwood in the mouth."

There was the honk of a big car at the curb, and Nita's voice humming the melody that haunted her little brain: "Nothing ever happens—"

The minister rose reluctantly, picked up his soft felt hat and his queer leather valise that showed a sharp corner where the Bible and Cruden's Concordance pressed against its side, and shook hands with Miss Crane. He looked at her searchingly with his nearsighted, spectacled eyes, still holding her hand, her tiny hand, gently.

"Do you know, Miss Lane," he said, smiling tenderly, "you are so like one I knew before I went away into the world? I so often think of her. I think she would be younger than you."

"Yes," said Miss Crane, her cold, needle-pricked fingers shaking even while they were gripped in his powerful hand, "I am sure she would be younger than I. And you never went back?" She turned her face from him and reached tremblingly for a trumpet blossom swaying in the doorway.

"No," he said, groping for words.

"No—I—never went back."

"But you succeeded? You have had the career you dreamed of?" She withdrew her hand and picked up a little blue blouse, all puckered by a half-pulled basting thread.

His mouth moved convulsively, a mouth that had held multitudes spell-bound.

"People think so," he said at last, from parched lips. "But sometimes I feel—"

A clock striking the hour reminded them of the passing present.

He gazed for a long moment at her downcast face, opened lips whence came no sound at all, reached out to her with a hand that trembled, and walked down the path between the red geraniums.

Along Came a Poet



By
HOLMAN
F.
DAY

ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

MOREOVER, if anything like that is going to be put through in **AT**, proper, seamanlike, and shipshape manner," avowed Cap'n Timeon Buker to Cap'n Aaron Sproul, "now is the time to tend to it, because it's coming May and you know what the potes say about the spring."

Cap'n Sproul's scowl hinted that he was not interested in what the poets said.

"Never was a pote who knew his business but what has said that the time young folks fall in love easiest was in the spring," pursued Cap'n Timeon. "So half your work is cut out for you. All you've got to do is have him at your house as the son of your old seafaring friend—and nature will tend to the rest."

"I don't know where you've gathered the idea that I'm running a matrimonial agency," protested Cap'n Sproul sourly.

He and Cap'n Timeon were enjoying the spring sunshine in the window of the shipping agency where Cap'n Sproul loafed and yarned in his spare time when business called him down from

inshore to the water-front city. He was sure to meet there old cronies who were still in harness and who were ashore between trips—such as Cap'n Timeon Buker, of the four-master *Thomas Tay*.

"Don't claim that you are," retorted Cap'n Buker, blandly persistent. "Don't presume that you'd undertake this little job for anybody except a man like me, who sailed mate with you in the old days. But seafaring men have got to stick together. I know you're going to do me a favor just as quick as I'd do you one. Seafaring chums are that kind."

"It ain't a fair stunt to ask of me—and put it that way."

"Look here, Cap'n Sproul, a foundation principle among sailors is that a man must take the responsibility for what he does himself."

"Then you take the responsibility of marrying off your own son, Cap'n Buker."

"That ain't the idea, sir. Since you've settled inshore and got married there, you have come down here and bragged to everybody who would listen—and especially to me, seeing that I'm a wid-

derer—that the right wife for a sailor is an inshore lady. You have advertised—and I'm answering the advertisement. Are you going back on me and on what you preach?"

"I ain't going back on anything. But you're asking me to take your son up country and manipulate him round till he's married off. I don't know your ideas about a daughter-in-law."

"Don't need to know 'em. I'll trust your judgment," asserted Cap'n Buker generously. "When I get an invite to the wedding, I'll feel sure that Cap'n Aaron Sproul has done the job like he does everything—A1 and seamanlike."

"And that son of yours ain't going to let himself be teamed around by me. He has probably got his own ideas. Maybe he has got somebody picked already."

"Hasn't either, and is perfectly willing to be helped and advised. Being a sailor, he says to me frequent that it's easy to fool sailors about wimmen. And a sailor that gets fooled on a wife is in a terrible state. Home has got to be made double sweet for a sailor because the sweetness ain't spread over all the days for him like it is for a landlubber. My son wants to be careful, and he's looking for a man like you to advise him. And I don't believe you're hard-hearted enough to disappoint us."

But Cap'n Sproul did not exhibit any signs of enthusiasm.

"You've probably got some likely girl right in view at this moment," persisted Cap'n Buker. "Now there sits my Tommy." He pointed a stubby forefinger at a young man who sat outside on a balcony which overhung the water. He was a square-hewed chap, bronzed and sturdy. "I don't claim that he is anyways a dude, Cap'n Sproul. But, to my way of thinking, girls ain't marrying dudes these days as much as they used to. They're looking more for the solid qualities. And my Tommy is solid and steady going. That's proved by his

being ready to take advice from his elders on the subject of a wife. And since he has grown up, he's developed into the best first mate I ever had aboard. If I lay him off this trip, are you going to sit there and tell me that you won't invite him up to your place to visit with you? He'll be good company." Cap'n Buker's tone was half appeal and half reproach.

"I have never shut my door on a shipmate or shipmate's son so far," admitted Cap'n Sproul. "He's welcome to go along with me; I'll be glad to have him to yarn with. I need to freshen up on the latest news 'long shore. But I ain't running a matrimonial bureau, I repeat again."

"But seeing that it's spring and young folks are li'ble to fall in love, as the potes say they do, and so forth," wheedled Cap'n Buker, "you ain't going to interfere with him, are you, if Nature takes her course?"

"If he chooses to pick out some starry night for a ramble, I shan't chase him into my house with a club," affirmed Cap'n Sproul.

"But if you can say a good word for him to some nice girl whom you could recommend—you'll do that, won't you?"

"He'll never have reason to sue me for slander," admitted Cap'n Sproul.

Cap'n Buker reached over and got hold of Cap'n Sproul's unwilling hand and pump-handled it with great vigor.

"That's the way to talk to a friend," he proclaimed. "Cautious, like a master mariner ought to be, but wide awake and up and coming when it's a matter of helping a friend. I consider him just as good as married."

It was after such fashion that Cap'n Aaron Sproul found the square-hewed, taciturn Thomas Buker unloaded upon him as guest and matrimonial client. This client was plainly and purely in a receptive mood. His attitude and conduct showed that he proposed to sit tight and oblige the cap'n to produce

goods, and at last he dropped hints. This was on the fourth day of his stay at the cap'n's home. During those days, he had never stepped foot off the cap'n's porch except to trail the worthy examiner to the post office. Mr. Buker had developed into something almost as inert as a bur. He had never volunteered any of the maritime chat for which Cap'n Sproul was hungry. The cap'n was obliged to drill for the information he wanted, and Mr. Buker's replies were aggravating models of laconic utterance.

The hints dropped by Mr. Buker were not of the feather-light sort.

He broke in on the cap'n suddenly. Cap'n Sproul had been asking whether sticking a sixth mast on the *Wyoming* had brought her up to expectations.

"Cap'n Sproul, when are you and I going to talk sensible business?"

"What business?"

"Business I'm here on."

"If you mean it's about picking out a wife for you—and I reckon that's what you do mean—I say distinctly that you've got to tend to that for yourself."

"But that wasn't your talk to father."

"It was, too, but he was bound and determined to twist it to suit himself."

"I believe what my father tells me. He would never have laid me off this trip and sent me up here unless there had been a good understanding about the matter. Bring on the girl!"

This was the longest speech that had passed Mr. Buker's lips in the four days, and indicated the depth of his interest in something other than maritime affairs.

"Look here!" exploded Cap'n Sproul. "Do you think I've contracted to have a parade of girls past here and let you review 'em from this porch? If you're up here looking for a wife, you go out and cruise for yourself."

"Father said——"

"He did all his own talking and planning, and because I didn't cuff his old

chops, he thought I was agreeing to what he said. I tell you now what I told him then—I ain't a matrimonial agency."

"I thought it was a trade and all arranged," stated Mr. Buker. "Father put it that way to me. He said you were willing to see that the son of an old shipmate didn't get fooled in picking out a wife. It sounded reasonable to me, and so I came up here. I'm sorry I have butted in on you, Cap'n Sproul. It's father's fault. I'll go along off about my business." There were simple dignity and honest apology in the young man's tones, and the cap'n was promptly touched in a tender spot.

"Just hold on, sonny," he hastened to say. "It's touchy business picking a wife for another man, and naturally I didn't want to meddle. But I realize that a sailorman is fooled easier on girls than 'most any other fellow, and it's tophet for him when he picks the wrong kind. You go peek around town a little, and report to me, and if you pick bad, I'll advise. I can do that much."

"I shan't make any progress that way," lamented Mr. Buker. "I'm diffident and backward where girls are concerned, and I don't dare to go close enough to look 'em over careful. I might as well go back to sea if you don't find your way clear to help me any more'n that. And it's too bad, because I'd make some girl a good husband, even if I have to say so for myself. I hain't got any bad habits, I'd be out from underfoot more'n half the time, and I own four-sixteenths into the *Thomas Tay*—and it's paying twelve per cent net, besides my wages."

"Perhaps I can go a little speck farther'n what I've said," acknowledged the cap'n, won by this helplessness and by Mr. Buker's tones. "I still refuse to be considered as a matrimonial agent, but my hand is always out to a sailor. Perhaps I can do a little sly work on the side, so that you can——"



"In the meantime I want you to shake hands with my close and particular friend, Mate Thomas Buker."

He stopped talking suddenly, and peered under his palm. A girl was coming along the sidewalk.

"Huish!" he warned Mr. Buker hissing between his teeth. "Take a good look when she passes close aboard. She's Myra Budd, old John Budd's only girl. Old John's got money—runs a private bank. Bright girl. Full of new ideas. Her looks talk for themselves."

And in that instance looks certainly did talk. She was a very pretty girl. Her spring garb was piquantly fresh. Mr. Buker stared at the pink cheeks and the golden hair under the big white hat.

While Cap'n Sproul groped helplessly for some excuse that would halt her for his client's closer inspection, Miss Budd solved the difficulty herself. She opened the cap'n's gate and came up the

walk with a cheery little nod and a chirp of salutation.

"I do hope that you're filled with spring happiness to-day, Captain Sproul," she said, "because I've come to ask a favor."

In most cases, with mariner's caution, Cap'n Sproul glowered when his townspeople came to him asking favors, for he had been pulled into some sad affairs in spite of his best efforts. Now he arose, made his best bow, and volunteered to grant that favor, employing a heartiness that brought a flush of delight to the young lady's cheeks.

"I was 'most minded to walk past, sir," she confessed. "You know, we're rather afraid of Captain Aaron Sproul. But I am so, so anxious to have your help!"

"If there's anything I can do to help you, marm, all you've got to do is let me know," declared the cap'n, spurred to this offer by his sudden new hopes in behalf of his protégé. "And in the meantime I want you to shake hands with my close and particular friend, Mate Thomas Buker, known from Lubec to the Key as the smartest young chap 'long coast."

Mr. Buker rose and ducked a bow. He did not advance to shake hands, slighting the opening afforded by the cap'n's manner of introduction. The cap'n scowled at him. The young lady had graciously advanced two steps to meet him.

"Yes, marm, if there's any favor I can do for you," repeated the cap'n, trying to hide his client's deficiencies by extra affability, "just say the word—and if there's anything my friend Buker can do, you'll find him just as ready as I am in any good cause."

It had occurred to Cap'n Sproul that Miss Budd was probably canvassing for some of the myriad societies with which she was associated. The cap'n knew her reputation as an organizer of all the up-to-date reforms and movements. He made the preliminary motions of "digging for coin."

"Oh, my, no!" expostulated Miss Budd, putting up a gloved hand, at which Mr. Buker gazed with much disturbed admiration. "I'm not soliciting funds for any of my reforms to-day. I want your coöperation, Captain Sproul, in a really great undertaking."

"Shall be pleased and proud to co-operate, Miss Budd. But I want you to talk to my friend, here, just as you talk to me—take him in, too. It would hurt his feelings if he should be left out."

"The more I can interest, the better it will be for the cause, sir. I shall be glad to have Mr. Buker take part in the general work. But I must talk to you first, Captain Sproul, for I need a prom-

inent citizen of this town for special service."

"Just take this chair, miss, and explain," invited the cap'n genially. "But I tell you beforehand that I'll agree to do anything you ask me to do. I'm sorry my friend Buker ain't a citizen here, so that you could ask him. He's younger and is always willing."

Miss Budd sat down and divided a pretty smile between the two. Mr. Buker stood in rigid attitude, like an automaton waiting to have a button pushed.

"Sit down, friend Buker," admonished the cap'n. "Let's make this a nice, sociable party."

Mr. Buker obeyed, without removing his eyes from the charming face.

"Captain Sproul, you are a reading man and a thinking man, and therefore I need not dwell on the dangers of the greatest pest the homes of humanity must fight."

"Not at all, and I agree with you perfectly," declared the cap'n, giving Mr. Buker a shrewd side glance in which he tried to explain to that gentleman that this was the proper and diplomatic way in which to deal with femininity.

"It's a glorious crusade, and it's an inspiring thing to see the whole nation waking up as it has."

"That's right, and my friend Buker agrees with me," said the cap'n, not in the least understanding what Miss Budd was talking about, but determined to show his alacrity as a volunteer under any banner she might raise.

"And it's so glorious to find that you are with me so whole-heartedly and are going to serve in the capacity where I need you. Captain Sproul, it isn't best that anybody else ever says in my hearing that you are snappy when a favor is asked."

"This town is full of liars, Miss Budd. As you were just saying, it's a glorious crusade, and I'm glad to be in it, right at the front."

Mentally he was saying: "If you set a woman to rigging a ship, she'd get the jib boom on behind and the masts upside down. Why in tophet don't she say what she's driving at?"

He did not discover just then, for his friend Hiram Look came hustling into the yard, slamming the gate behind him.

"I told Mr. Tate I'd meet him here where he and you and I could talk the thing over comfortably," announced Hiram. "Hasn't got along as yet, eh?"

The cap'n did not relish this interruption, and his demeanor showed it.

"I don't know any Tate," he growled.

"Oh, yes, you do!" said Hiram, nodding a greeting to Miss Budd, as he came upon the porch and sat down. "He used to live here in town. He's a young man worth your while to meet, Miss Budd. Guess he must have moved away from here before your father came to town," proceeded Hiram. "He's right in your line. Greatest organizer and hustler you ever saw. Makes reforms a specialty. Is field secretary of the National Municipal Uplift Society. Guarantees to take a dead town and put the thrill of life along its keel. Also handles a few commercial side lines. Is right onto his job every minute. We need some new life in this town, and I'm going to put him next to some of the principal men here and help him start something. Of course you know him, Aaron. If I ain't mistaken, he was associated once with you in some way. I understood him to say so."

"The only Tate I ever knew in this town was a pote," returned the cap'n, "and he only moved about twice in an hour and the rest of the time sat and rolled up his eyes and lapped the end of a lead pencil. He was plastered onto me as a secretary the time they made me serve as chairman of the centennial celebration, and is alive to-day—provided he ain't been buried in one of them trances—only because I've got

good control of my temper and hate to kill anything that's helpless. He took advantage of me one day, and tried to read me a pome that had eleven hundred lines in it. His name was Consetena Tate."

"The same one, I tell you. Consetena Tate—that's the boy!"

"It don't seem likely that folks enough would be found in this world to abuse two infants by giving 'em that name," stated the cap'n, "but it can't be the same critter. A man like you, Hiram, would have killed him with a fly spanker before agreeing to meet him here or any other place. He had hair longer'n an Angora tomcat's, and a hossfly could beat him on practical motions, because a hossfly has got an aim in life and tends to it."

"You can't squint at a tadpole and estimate how far he'll jump after he sheds his tail and becomes a frog," declared the old showman. "Tate has shed that hair and his fool notions. He's all right."

"There's a mistake," insisted the cap'n. "It ain't Pote Tate. Not the one I knew. Not that marlinespike with a wop of oakum on top of it. And seeing that I ain't got any business with Tate, whoever he is, you'll have to excuse me, Hiram, while I tend to some real business which my friend Buker and I have with Miss Budd."

Hiram leaned back in the porch chair and crossed his legs with much equanimity.

"Go right ahead and don't mind me," he admonished. "I've agreed to meet Mr. Tate here, and I'll wait."

"Oh, it's perfectly all right to have Mr. Look remain," Miss Budd hastened to say, interpreting the cap'n's scowl. "It's nothing secret. In fact, I'm seeking publicity. Since you have consented to serve, Captain Sproul, I'll run along after I've given you a detail or two."

The cap'n attended on her words with intense and somewhat apprehensive



*He slapped one on the cap'n's knee, killed two in rapid succession on Mr. Buker's
came dancing back, dealing*

interest, wondering to what he had pledged himself in his efforts to further the cause of his protégé.

"I am the local vice president of the National 'Death to the Fly' Crusade,

Captain Sproul. We desire especially to enlist the interest and aid of the children in the next school vacation. To the child killing the greatest number of flies during the coming summer, we



cringing back, chased a fugitive to the end of the porch and slew him, and then blows to right and left.

shall present a gold watch. We need a prominent and responsible citizen to judge the contest and handle the children tactfully. And it has been so good of you to volunteer, Captain Sproul!"

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The cap'n sat there and stared at her and felt the warmth of sudden wrath at the back of his neck. He forgot Mr. Buker. His tongue was beginning to wrestle with hot words of repudiation.

But a chance remark by Hiram Look suddenly dammed the imminent outburst.

"It's too bad you have to pick a regular citizen of the town, Miss Budd. The ideal man to referee that contest would be Mr. Tate. He's all for reform and improvement and new ideas. Maybe you could work him and me in as assistant referees." Hiram beamed amiably on the young woman. He added: "I want you to meet Mr. Tate and get real close to him. You and he are going to make a great team for reform in this town."

Cap'n Sproul, his jealousy excited on behalf of himself and his client, was now grateful that his tongue had been twisted.

"I reckon I can referee without help—and if help is needed, here is my friend Buker."

"I think having one judge will be more feasible," said Miss Budd. "And Captain Sproul was very prompt to volunteer. I do hope we shall roll up a perfectly wonderful score. The national association offers special prizes for the first half million flies from the rural towns—but, of course, this count must be vouched for by the judge. Having Captain Sproul as judge, seeing that he is high sheriff and has been so prominent, will make our count official, and no one can dispute it."

"Count!" gasped the cap'n, just appreciating the nature of the sacrifice demanded of him.

"It can be done very rapidly and deftly by using a flat surface and scraping the flies along with a knitting needle," said Miss Budd. "I'll show you, Captain Sproul, after we're ready to go to work."

She turned to the protégé.

"And now, seeing that Mr. Buker is eager to assist in a good cause," said Miss Budd brightly, giving the young man a rare smile, "I will enlist him." From a green bag adorned with her

monogram, she drew a wire fly spanker that was decorated with a dainty bow of blue ribbon. "Our motto, Mr. Buker, is this:

"Wherever I may find a fly,
For sake of health that fly must die."

She extended the handle of the lethal weapon toward Mr. Buker. But he shook his head.

"No need of wasting that thing on me," he said, with seaman's bluntness. "There ain't any flies out to sea."

"You take that and be thankful to get such a souvenir," commanded the cap'n, disgusted by this lack of diplomacy.

"There's no sense in cluttering up a sailor's dunnage with truck he can't use," insisted the stubborn Buker.

Hiram reached out and took the spanker and lifted his hat gallantly.

"I enlist," he declared. "Show me the enemy."

Just then a young man swung in at the gate and came briskly up the walk. Cap'n Sproul recognized some of the general features of the new arrival. It was certainly Consetena Tate, the "pote" he had known and despised for his languid inefficiency. But this was no pale and long-haired poet. He was smartly dressed, he was full of self-assertion, his hair was closely trimmed, he wore his hat on the side of his head, and he had the solidity of a young man who ate three square meals a day and had no time to devote to staring into vacancy and licking the end of a pencil.

"Did I hear the word 'enlist'?" he demanded. "Is there an enemy?"

He swept off his hat and acknowledged his introduction to Miss Budd by the prompt intervention of Mr. Look.

"I'll take one of those swatters," volunteered Cap'n Sproul, trying to stem the tide.

But when Miss Budd had produced it, Mr. Tate frisked forward with gay nimbleness, seized the spanker, and began to kill flies with great energy. He slapped one on the cap'n's knee, killed

two in rapid succession on Mr. Buker's cringing back, chased a fugitive to the end of the porch and slew him, and then came dancing back, dealing blows to right and left. Miss Budd giggled joyously at this display of zeal, and the cap'n scowled at his protégé, cursing Mr. Buker's ineptness by that look.

"You don't seem to be tending to the pote business quite so close as you used to," remarked the cap'n sullenly.

He expected that this thrust at youthful indiscretions would embarrass Mr. Tate. But the cap'n himself was the one who was disconcerted, for Tate seemed to welcome the reference.

"I live poetry these days instead of wasting time in writing it, Captain Sproul. Life is empty unless there is poetry in it. Poetry makes life worth living and makes the world go round—but it doesn't have to be written or read. Now, is this thing I hold in my hand a mere tool of wire with which to kill vulgar flies? Oh, no! The poetry in my soul makes it a lance of chivalry, blessed by a fair lady's hands and given into my keeping so that I may go forth and wage war against the hosts of evil, as did the knights of old. Thus poetry transforms the common and vulgar into high service." He swatted another fly. "Death to the Saracens! Death to the poisoner of infants!"

"This is wonderful! It's an idea!" gasped Miss Budd. "I'll enroll my boys and girls as, we'll say, Chevaliers of the Home Protection Brigade. I agree with you, Mr. Tate, that the imagination of a poet is the grandest thing in all the world."

"Ah, I see you have the poetical instinct also," said Mr. Tate. "You grasp at poetical ideas so readily and transform them by your own imagery of thought. Chevaliers of the fly-killing youth of our land! That's an inspiration. The wonderful idea is yours, and if you will intrust the details to me, as organizer and promoter, I can

make it a nation-wide movement of which you shall reign as queen. You shall distribute the crosses of chivalry. Death to the fly!"

"I've been telling Miss Budd that you and she were going to get along fine together," affirmed Hiram. He was glowing with gratification. "You're birds of a feather. Both out for reforms."

"I am very fortunate if Mr. Tate will coöperate with me in planning out the movement that has just been flashed before me so suddenly," said Miss Budd.

"I prefer to work humbly under your guidance," stated Mr. Tate.

Unutterable disgust and sullen rancor surged in the breast of Cap'n Sproul. This brisk fly-by-night had swung along, and had apparently plucked this very desirable young lady right out from under the nose of his clumsy client.

"I have found that details planned in the first fervor of the imagination are very valuable," asserted Mr. Tate, surveying this new associate with undisguised admiration. "Now, if you have time to listen, I will elaborate."

He drew a chair close to hers, and they began an animated conversation which excluded other members of the party.

"It has just come to me that they'd make a mighty fine couple," Hiram informed the cap'n, sotto voce. "Guess I'll go ahead and arrange it."

This smug assumption of management whetted a wire edge on the cap'n's rancor. He felt as if somebody had calmly stepped up and appropriated property that belonged to him. The vague ideas he had entertained about securing this prize for his client had become suddenly crystallized. It seemed to him now that Hiram Look was breaking in on a real engagement. He drew the old showman to one side.

"I've got to warn you," he informed his friend, "that you and that pote are

trompling in where you ain't wanted and ain't expected."

"Ain't wanted, eh?" demanded Hiram. "Suppose you take a look out of the corner of your eye at the new firm of Tate & Budd and have another guess."

"Don't you go to work and get this flapdoodle about flies mixed up with the serious things of life. That pote has got about as much weight and worth as a hossfly—and, being a lady, she'll sit and hear him buzz for a time. But the man she's going to marry is my friend, here, Mate Buker. He's come up here for that special purpose."

"He has, hey?" inquired Mr. Look, with a side glance at the immovable Mr. Buker, who sat goggling at the animated couple discussing the affairs of the new nation-wide movement. "Is that some of your picking for her? I had a petrified Mormon giant in my side show who showed more life than that critter does."

"He owns good vessel property and works at a real job instead of fanning wind with his tongue," asserted the cap'n, with venom.

"She'd have to put casters on him and move him around out from underfoot when she was sweeping," said Hiram.

"If she marries him, she won't have to sweep. If she should marry that pote, she'd have to take in washing."

"I didn't call in here to-day to start a matrimonial agency," began Hiram, "but I——"

"And I ain't running one."

"You're talking as if you were. But I've got five hundred dollars that says that girl will never be hornswoggled into marrying your nomination. You'll have to improve the case first, and put in new works. His mainspring is either broke or else he has run down."

But just then Mr. Buker displayed signs of life. He jumped up, hurried to

Cap'n Sproul, and pushed him to a far end of the porch.

"If I don't get that girl to be my wife, I'll go off some place and die!" he panted. "I've fell into love with her, sitting right here and looking at her. I love her so like fury that I'll never draw a happy breath if I don't marry her. Oh, my Gawd, Cap'n Sproul, get her for me!"

"If you're in love with her, why haven't you been up and doing so as to show it to her, you tormented fool?" hissed the cap'n. "Hain't you got the least knack for courting?"

"What do you expect me to do—stand on my head, or roll over? I've been trying to be a gent. You needn't tell me that a girl likes to have a fresh dude come walloping round like that critter. I've a good mind to go bang him side of the face."

"If I wanted a handbook written on how not to court a girl, I'd parcel the job out to you," stated the cap'n. "After watching you operate, I had made up my mind to tie a tag onto you and ship you back to your father, but"—here the cap'n set his lips grimly—"I've just changed my mind and decided to tie a can to that pote."

But the cap'n found no opportunity to put his project into effect just then. When he turned, Miss Budd had started to leave, and Mr. Tate was escorting her. Hiram Look closed their retreat, his features wearing a complacent grin.

"I'm so grateful because you will serve as judge, Captain Sproul," declared Miss Budd from the gate. "It's nice to have such a prominent man to depend on."

Cap'n Sproul set his feet wide apart, put his arms behind him, and slapped an angry fist into palm. He watched them out of sight, and then turned on Mr. Buker.

"There he goes, making good by his gift of gab!" he exploded. "And a man can't court a girl without gab. A

Scarboro clam is a bright conversationalist compared with you, Buker. What in santup's the matter with your tongue and your manners? Why didn't you take that fly spanker and make good?"

"I told her the truth. I believe in telling the truth to wimmenfolks," stammered the lover.

"You blasted fool, making love to a woman is made up of careful and judicious lying! See what I've gone and done! I've agreed to sit down and count about eleven million dead flies on your account—and I made her think I was hankering to do it."

Mate Buker set back his shoulders, yanked down his waistcoat, and pulled himself together.

"Cap'n Sproul," he said manfully, "you've got to make a little allowance for a fellow who was taken by surprise and had fell overboard into love so deep that about all he could do was paddle hard and hold his breath. I never was in love before, and I was so numb for a while that I didn't know what was the matter with me. I want you to excuse me and give me another show."

"You think you can brace up, do you, and be of some help to me?"

"Yes, sir. I'll trail that dude till I can catch him alone, and I'll knock the block off'm him."

The cap'n bestowed a withering glance on his ally.

"If it wasn't for the fact that you ought to be seen even if you're not heard, I'd lock you down cellar in the pertater bin till I'd put this thing through. Don't you know that when a girl sympathizes with a feller, she's already half in love with him? If Tate could show her two black eyes that he'd got on her account, the wedding would prob'ly be announced for one week later."

He scratched his nose and stared into the wistful eyes of his protégé.

"You've got a lot to learn, Buker, and

here is lesson number one, made plain and simple so that you can remember it: When a feller is trying to cut you out, go ahead and rig taakul so as to make him stub his own toe in front of the girl—and rig that taakul so almighty sly that you won't be found out. You understand, eh?"

"Yes, sir."

"The harder a feller is running, the easier it is to make him stub his toe. This Pote Tate seems to be considerable of a galloper from one thing to another, if we are to take stock in general actions and in the synopsis Hime Look gave of him. We'll just sit right down on this porch and watch him operate until we get a line on him."

"There ain't many men who would grab in like this and help a chap, just for friendship," admitted Mr. Buker gratefully.

The cap'n, busy with his reflections on the self-sufficient air of Hiram Look, gave his client a sharp look and seemed about to spit out a tart remark or two.

But he merely remarked, "That's so, sonny," and held his peace.

"It ain't much use to try to, make a young feller understand how I feel when Hime Look cocks his eye at me and gets a certain tone in his voice," the cap'n pondered. "A feller who spends his time at sea doesn't understand matters between neighbors in the country. So I'll let Buker be grateful to me. It won't hurt any."

The next day the cap'n and Mr. Buker got considerable of a line on the scope of Mr. Tate's activities. He breezed up to the porch and delivered about a dozen mustard jars, in which there were varied assortments of dead flies. He explained that Miss Budd had sent them.

"She and I are working together most beautifully in this matter," he informed Cap'n Sproul. "A very charming young lady! Of course, I am very busy with a thousand and one affairs of my own,



Hiram Look was frantically and excitedly dashing more grenades into the raging fire.

but I'm always ready to take on more duties, especially when a delightful young lady makes the request."

"Yes, I can see that something has put the thrill of life along your keel since you used to operate here as a pote," remarked the cap'n dryly. "Did you get struck by lightning, or are you simply on the dead run trying to forget what you used to be?"

Mr. Tate smiled indulgently at this sarcasm.

"Because youth has its dreams, it's no sign that manhood cannot be wide awake," he said. "I nurtured my imagination, and now it is helping me to success. My business-uplift leagues are doing immense service. My imagination helps me to look ahead and see what municipalities need. I shall make my old home town flourish, and she shall come into her own at last. I shall be around later after your subscription, captain, when I have promulgated my plans. First education, inspiration, then admiration and coöperation—then I call for the cash."

Cap'n Sproul shoved his fists into his

pockets and held them there and scowled at Mr. Tate.

"But what avails an enlarged and improved municipality unless it is kept intact for its day and generation and preserved unto posterity?" demanded Mr. Tate, undismayed by the two sour faces on the porch. "If houses are built only to be razed by the fire fiend, and cellars of plenty left to gape empty at the cold stars of heaven, where is the profit to humanity? I preach uplift and improvement reforms without money and without price, going to and fro in the land. But in my business line I am the missionary of preservation of the holies of the home, the evangelist of protection from the fire fiend. Our homes, especially the homes of the villages and of the rural sections, are not protected today. Captain Sproul, if you should now hear your rooftop crackling above your head, what would you do?"

"I should give up all hope in case the Ancient and Honorable Fire Association of this town happened to hear of it," declared Cap'n Sproul, with much firmness. "They'd come up here and

wreck the place while I would be putting out the fire with my garden hose, and then would expect me to give them and their foreman, Hime Look, a banquet at town hall. I've seen them critters operate at a few fires."

"Your statement shows that you are a man of sense, Captain Sproul. Why have a fire company come ravaging through a home? Why allow the fire fiend to get his clutches well set? Why shall not each householder be his own savior and guardian? I say, I bring glad tidings to all who wish to preserve the sacred home. I represent the Home Savior Hand Grenade Fire Extinguisher, which should be installed in every house in the broad land——"

"Do you also handle a line of lightning rods?" asked the cap'n.

"I do, because a lightning rod is also a protector of the home."

"I thought you did," averred Cap'n Sproul. "Nobody but a lightning-rod man could sling language the way you do."

"I find you the same old sea dog, crisp and ever amusing," said Mr. Tate patronizingly. "But I am not here to sell you grenades. I do not need to ask folks to buy them. They sell themselves. I will merely inform you that on an evening very soon there will be a demonstration of the Home Savior grenades in the village square. A blazing pyre will be erected, from which the flames will leap high against the heavens. When the fire fiend is seen at the height of his wicked work, the Honorable Hiram Look, foreman of the Ancient and Honorable Fire Association, will advance proudly and cast a grenade upon the fire. One grenade will tame it——another will quench it into helplessness."

"I shall not ask you to buy any grenades, Captain Sproul. You will then and there join the rush of purchasers. In the meantime, that charming young lady, Miss Budd, asks you to count

these flies as soon as you can, because the names of the first contestants are to be published this week in the *Clarion* so that others may be stimulated to start in on the grand work."

He flourished a salute and hastened away with the same breeziness with which he had arrived.

Cap'n Sproul divided furious gaze between the departing Mr. Tate and the mustard jars which the emissary of Miss Budd had piled at his feet on the porch. Then he bent blistering looks on the protégé who had caused him to incur this hateful responsibility.

"I've got a blastnation fine summer's job lined out ahead of me!" blazed the cap'n. "And if I lay down on it now, Hime Look is just the kind of a critter who will grab in and make everlastingly good with that girl. Look here, Buker, you go along out there in the stable with them bottles and count flies. You haven't got head enough to do anything else to help this thing along."

Mr. Buker gathered the bottles and obeyed. But he seemed to be thinking very deeply on some matter.

His reveries continued throughout that day. He did not speak at table. He was regularly taciturn, but now he appeared to be dumb.

Cap'n Sproul's good wife was worried.

"Is there anything special the matter with him more than there has been?" she inquired.

"His mind is prob'ly full of flies and figgers," said the cap'n, with fine scorn for the general capabilities of Mate Buker.

Mr. Buker broke his silence only once the next day.

"I'd like to have you repeat that general and first rule of how to handle the feller who is trying to cut the other feller out."

The cap'n did so, dwelling on the advantage of making the rival work out

his own damnation or bring about his own ridiculous downfall.

"But I'll have to do it all by myself," added the cap'n scornfully. "You hain't got head enough even to please a girl and start in courting by taking a fly spanker she offers you. You just keep on counting them flies."

That evening Mr. Tate rode past the Sproul house in a buggy, accompanied by Miss Budd. They were apparently enjoying the spring twilight, and waved greeting to the two on the porch.

"He's getting in his licks fast," mourned the cap'n. "They all say it's terrible easy to catch a girl in the spring. If he gets the inside track with her, she'll probably be able to fetch her father round, even if Tate is only a fly-by-night. Old John has always done about as his girl wants him to. I guess, Buker, seeing that you ain't no great help in time of trouble, you'd better cast around town for another girl."

"I won't ever have anybody except her," declared Buker, his voice breaking in his stress of feeling. "I've picked her, and I'm going to have her. And I ain't telling you all I'm thinking about in this thing. You'll wake up and find out that I've got more brains than a belaying pin, even if you don't think so now."

"As general manager of this thing, I want to know what you mean," commanded the cap'n.

"You won't find out right now," asserted Mr. Buker.

"Look here, don't you dare to——"

"I'm studying your first general principle, and I'm obeying your orders, like a sailor is taught to do," shouted Mr. Buker. "I'm aloft and tending right to business. Do you give off other orders?"

"Why—why, no," admitted the cap'n, rather taken aback.

"All right, I'll keep on obeying orders—and it ain't a sailor's place to talk back."

And with that dictum the cap'n had to rest content—though he found Mr. Buker's remarks extremely cryptic.

Furthermore, Mr. Buker developed other habits that the cap'n did not understand. He took to staying out all times o' night.

"Young Buker," said the cap'n sternly one morning, "I'm willing to make excuses for this spring feeling, but I'm distrusting your intellects if you're butting into my management. A sailor ought to stay home and be in bed nights."

"I ain't stepping outside my rights," asseverated Mr. Buker. "You told my father that if I wanted to pick out a starry night for a ramble, you wouldn't chase me into the house with a club. Didn't you tell him that?"

"I did," admitted the cap'n.

"Well, the last few nights have been starry."

And that left nothing more to be said on that branch of the subject.

The demonstration of the Home Savior Hand Grenade was advertised, day and date, all over that section of the country, and the name of Hiram Look was appended to the notice, as master of ceremonies and foreman of the Ancient and Honorable Firemen's Association.

The villagers displayed unusual interest in the affair. Householders brought hayrack loads of the dead boughs with which they had banked their houses; storekeepers donated packing cases and empty kerosene barrels. On the evening that had been selected, a great throng surrounded a veritable mountain of combustibles that had been erected in the village square. The Ancients attended in a body, wearing their red shirts and scoop hats and accompanied by their fife-and-drum corps.

Then Consetena Tate stood forth and addressed the multitude. He was lighted by the torches, and even the rancorous Cap'n Sproul was obliged to ad-

mit to himself that he made an attractive appearance in his frock coat and white waistcoat.

The cap'n noted that, as Mr. Tate spouted his glorification of the home and impressed the vital need of protecting it, he kept his impassioned gaze on Miss Myra Budd, who sat in the open window of her father's bank, a small wooden building at one side of the square.

"Buker," said Cap'n Sproul, "from the time when the peacock first spread his tail in the Garden of Eden and strutted in front of the hen, it has been female nature to kotow to the one who can show off best. It's too bad you can't sail the *Thomas Tay* through this village square, every sheet drawing and a bone in her mouth. Then mebbe that girl would take her eyes off'n that pote for a minute. As it is, I'm afraid Hime Look has beat me out on this projick. I can't show my goods to advantage."

"It may be different when principle number one, made plain and simple so I can understand it, gets to working," stated Mr. Buker.

"What do you mean?" snapped the cap'n. "I'm managing this thing for you—doing the best I can without much to work with—and I don't want any more of this riddle-come-riddle-come-ree business."

"I hain't got anything more to say—not right now," declared the client, with much determination. His eyes gleamed strangely, and he kept snapping his stubby fingers into his palms, betraying great nervousness.

Cap'n Sproul was silent. He could not resist the soaring peroration that Mr. Tate was delivering. It was a screamer. He pointed to the monstrous heap of combustibles, food for the fire fiend. He pointed to a rack that held a dozen grenades. Each grenade had a bow of blue ribbon tied about its neck.

"There they rest in ranks, couching their lances in defense of the home,

ladies and gentlemen—each one a knight who has been decorated by the soft hand of gentle lady."

He flung a fond look in the direction of Miss Budd.

"I will now call the fire fiend to his work—summon him to the dreadful task he loves so well to do. Come, fiend, from the depths of perdition!"

With a real magician's gesture, as if he were calling up a spook, he waved his arms, snapped the cover of a patent cigar lighter, and set fire to the heap. The resinous boughs, dry and as inflammable as powder, sent the first hissing serpents of flame up as scouts, and then the whole mass burst into roaring ruin.

"And now," shouted Mr. Tate, "the Honorable Hiram Look will order a charge of the knights and guardians of the home. Behold what the Home Savior Grenade will do!"

Foreman Look grabbed two of the grenades from the rack.

"Them bottles of goozle better do something and do it mighty sudden!" observed one of the Ancients to a comrade. "That's a devil of a fire to start in the middle of this village on a dry night like this."

Mr. Look hurled first one grenade into the riot of flame, and then he hurled the other.

"Behold what the Home Savior will do!" repeated Mr. Tate, in thrilling tones.

The throng did behold; the flames leaped at least twenty feet higher against the heavens.

Foreman Look dashed back and secured two more grenades, and dashed the two of them at once into the raging conflagration.

The additional burst of flame and heat drove the spectators back with such precipitancy that they tumbled over one another.

"Whoever named them things Home Savors overlooked a better name, and

that's Hell Helpers," commented Cap'n Sproul, scrubbing his chin in his retreat, to discover whether his beard had been singed.

Hiram Look was frantically and excitedly dashing more grenades into the raging fire, and now Mr. Tate was assisting. They discharged the whole battery of twelve, and then followed the other fugitives, running for their lives.

The fire had become a veritable maelstrom of tophet. It was piling in pillars of flame a hundred feet into the sky.

When Foreman Look and Mr. Tate went floundering through the crowd, the head of the Ancients was expressing his opinion of Mr. Tate and the Home Savior grenades in a violent and profane manner. The roofs of buildings bordering the square were beginning to smoke under the intense heat.

"That's what comes of doing business with a loon-headed pote!" yelled a frenzied voice in the crowd. "Consetena Tate never did know enough to drive cows home. He has rigged a cussed scheme to burn up our village."

"Lynch the pop-eyed son of a cannoodle!" shrieked somebody else. "Ride him on a rail!"

"Get out Hecla One and we'll tend to him later!" roared Hiram Look. "Wherever you are, Tate," he continued, failing to find his late associate in the crowd near him, "I'll show you later that you can't make a monkey of me before my own townsmen with your fakes."

"That Tate doesn't stand very high just now, eh?" muttered Mr. Buker in the cap'n's ear. "He's gone and stubbed his toe, huh? Principle One, as you outlined it to me, is working, huh?"

"What do you mean?"

"It means I took your advice and acted on it. He stored them Home Savors in Look's stable, and I slyed in there nights, slipped the corks, emptied the stuff out, and filled 'em with kerosene. I'm much obliged to you for your

advice, because I've queered him in this town."

"I never gave you any such advice," raged Cap'n Sproul, noting that the roof of John Budd's little bank building was ablaze. "There'll be an investigation made. You'll be put into State prison."

"They won't find out anything from me," said Mr. Buker.

"You blasted fool of a sailor! If they even get you on the stand, the whole thing will be wormed out of you by them lawyers and you'll tell 'em I advised you to do it! You hustle out of this town with that dunnage sack of yours inside of half an hour, or I'll turn State's evidence and hand you over to the constable."

"But I love——"

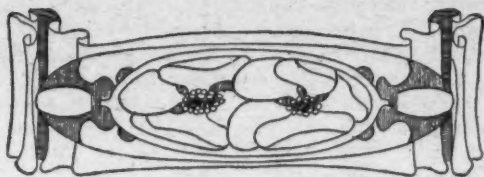
The cap'n seized him by the shoulders and ran him out of the square.

"Young Buker, you get out into the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. You're safer there. You can't set it on fire. And you'd better hurry. I reckon that pote is at least five miles ahead of you, by the way he was running when he left."

The fact that his rival had departed may have helped Mr. Buker's feelings and accelerated his departure. At any rate, he went.

The Ancients, being on the spot that evening and in full panoply of service, stopped the fire before John Budd's building had been wholly destroyed. It was the first time in the history of the organization that a fire had ever been stopped by them.

"I've found out what the trouble is with you critters," Hiram informed them at the supper he tendered late in the evening at the tavern. "You have spent too much time before now hunting for your uniforms after the alarm has rung. Glue 'em onto yourselves and sleep in 'em after this, especially when you see a pote coming into town advertising fire extinguishers."



On Half Time

By H. M. D'Orsay

ILLUSTRATED BY G. C. PUGSLEY

HALF time's a bad time—as what time is not?" reflected Celia Wicks, one of "the Wicks in the Brattleboro Woolen Mills." "But the least little piece of lace an' ribbon an' a bunch of beads'd be all I'd need to make it." She eyed enviously the peddler who was trying hard to effect a sale where he had begun to suspect the purse was empty.

"Mother, I've just got to have the makin's of a dog collar! All the girls has one—but me," said Celia.

"If the mill was runnin' full, or even half—I'd let you get it——"

"Oh, mother! Please, please, say yes! I don't often beg, now do I? An' I won't ask for anythin' again in a long time." She slipped her arm coaxingly through her mother's.

"The way things has got to be now, I just don't dare to spend one cent, except to eat, an' that's all there is to it!" declared Mary Wicks, in accents that betrayed her fear of the future.

"Haven't I worked—like a dog—when there was work—an' do I complain? I can't help the days I had bad work an' didn't get so much. Them's the days I worked hardest. An' I do think it's tough if I can't get anythin' like any one else," pleaded Celia.

"Madam, you know best; but it don't cost much—what she wants. Ten cents

the velvet ribbon. Twelve cents and a half the lace. I'll throw in the beads cheap—say, a quarter for the whole thing—rather than disappoint a good girl," said Mr. Jacobs magnanimously, trying to arouse a little enthusiasm.

"I've got seven cents toward it myself, so you can't refuse now, Ma Wicks!" Celia was thinking of the dance to be given by the spinners the following Saturday night—one of the few pleasures the young folks enjoyed. Mrs. Wicks was thinking—of other things.

"Celia, don't tease. Remember how hard times are, an' a strike threatened. Where'd we all be then?" She noticed the swift look of disappointment that swept the girl's face, and went on more gently: "I'm sure, Celia, I'd be only too glad to see all your wants satisfied—but you know how it is. Denis O'Brien's Tom was a whole hour explainin' to me what good there was in a law named 'K'—said it kept out foreign-made goods. If it don't keep the mill runnin', what good is it, learnin' about it? He explained that was because the supply was more'n the demand, an' said a lot about the owners havin' stacks of cloth in warehouses that they can't sell, as nobody seems to be wearin' so much cloth as they were. Anyway, times is worse an' worse, an'



"Madam, you know best; but it don't cost much—what she wants. Ten cents the velvet ribbon. Twelve cents and a half the lace. I'll throw in the beads cheap."

Denis better put Tom to work if that's all the good his learnin' is doin' him," ended Mrs. Wicks wearily, forgetting Celia and the peddler in her own troubled thoughts.

"That's all talk, mother, about the owners not bein' able to sell," explained her son Bob. "If they've got it stored, it's to raise the price. That's why they hold it back—to make it scarce. It's my opinion they're tryin' to scare us, gettin' ready to make another cut in the price list. They're tryin' to scare us into workin' for nothin', that's all! They'll see! It'll take more'n half time an' shuttin'-down talk to kill the strike. That's always the game to starve us to it."

Bob Wicks' features were set and stern under the flaccid, colorless skin, giving his youthful face the look of a middle-aged man.

"Don't you be the one to talk strike," said his little ten-year-old sister Jean; "will you, Bobby?"

"Don't worry! As long as they can get you to spend your life for fifty cents a day, you won't lose your job, provided"—and Bob's face was not good to see—"you do a woman's work, Jean."

"I will, Bob. Mrs. White says I do now," said Jean innocently.

"I'll be moving, if there's nothing doing," said Jacobs, slowly laying back his wares.

Bob laid down ten cents—all he had—saying: "If that'll help, you're welcome, sis!"

"Oh, Bob, I just hate to take it!" said Celia wistfully.

"I'm surprised at you, Celia! How can you think of anythin' so silly—now!" said Mrs. Wicks vehemently. "I wish you could have it, but you must suffer together, children. Keep your few cents, all of you. You'll have more need of 'em, maybe," she ended grimly.

The peddler pulled the old black oil-cloth about his pack, tied it securely with a rope, and glanced out over the small New England village. The mist that had begun amid sunshine had settled into a heavy downpour, and, turning again to Mrs. Wicks, Jacob ventured: "You look an honest woman. May I leave my pack here for a few days?"

"If you're fearin', I'd rather you didn't, while if you have no other place, I'll not refuse." A spark of resentment had kindled at the peddler's rather dubious compliment; after which Mrs. Wicks left the room.

"Don't mind ma," said Bob. "She's a little sensitive regarding her honesty. You can't blame her, since it's about her only comfort. Just leave 'em, Jacobs. They're safe." And as the peddler offered him a necktie, he added: "You don't mean the rope one, I hope," and laughingly took leave of the hard-worked, worried little man.

The little factory town had never been able to support a good store. Those who could afford the fare, went to the city. Most of the residents depended upon Jacobs, each one trying to get him before he had exhibited his wares to the others, or before "the pick" was gone.

"That Jacobs has kept me back with the bread," said Mrs. Wicks. Putting a shawl over her head, as it was now clearing up a little, she directed: "Ce-

lia, watch the fire. I'm goin' to Molly McBride's to borrow some emptin's."

Vainly Celia tried to keep her thoughts from the pack upstairs, with its lace, velvet, and beads.

"Chances are," she caught herself thinking, "he'd never miss it off'n a whole bolt!"

She put the thought out of her mind—but didn't sweep the corners, and it kept bobbing up to make war upon her scruples.

No one was about, and she went upstairs, "just to take a peep." The materials seemed more desirable than ever. Not long afterward she was ascending the narrow stairs again. This time she carried the scissors. "Not to cut the lace or velvet—oh, dear, no!" she reassured herself. "Just to have, in case the rope couldn't be untied—for another little peep."

Away back in her brain—subtle, remote—lay a black thought. She would not face it. Hurriedly her fingers found the knots and untied them. The black thought urged haste, and Celia obeyed.

"Oh!" came in a soft breath of admiration. The pack lay open, the laces, velvets, and beads revealed. The black thought was in control. Quickly Celia extracted a bunch of glittering jets and thrust them within her waist. Slipping to her knees, she undid the folds of lace. For a moment she recoiled; then, turning her back, she reached from behind. "Snip" went the scissors. The same process was pursued with the velvet. Then a strange thing happened. The black thought became, as it were, an outside agent. It had dissolved partnership with her and become her persecutor.

"You stole it! Now what'll you do?" Obsequious before, it was now brazen. It went on: "A nice state of affairs, after the man trusted your mother's honesty! A thief with a beaded lace collar! A thief in an honest family! You could have had your brother's last cent.

Wonder what he'd think of you if he knew."

"If I knew how I'd feel, I'd never have taken it. What made me do it? I can't wear it. Every one knows when I get anythin' new."

She started guiltily at the least creak of the stairs.

"Now you've done it! That's the main thing," said Black Thought. "It's done."

"I'll tell mother——"

"There you go! A coward! Course you won't tell! Ain't she worried enough about debts and strikes?"

"But I don't see why I did it. I never meant to, honest——"

"Come now, that doesn't go! You know you did—planned it quite skillful, too. You'll get expert in time."

"Oh, don't!" And Celia would have covered her eyes and stuffed her ears had it done any good.

"I'll help you!"

Celia glanced up. "It" sounded sincere. She listened:

"Climb up the slats, where Bob goes into the loft to throw down hay."

Again Celia obeyed, thinking, "I'm glad cows can't tell what they seem to know," as old Dolly went on philosophically chewing her cud.

She hid the stuff back of a beam, up in the rafters.

The peddler came the second day after. He offered Mrs. Wicks a pair of black silk mitts. He did not notice Celia, whose cheeks were scarlet. Neither did her mother.

"When he misses the things you stole, he'll be glad he gave your mother a present for honesty!" Something diabolical seemed to give way in Celia's brain—made her want to laugh aloud, although her feelings were far from mirthful.

"Instead of moping, go make it up. Now that you've got it, it can't be helped," the Thing was suggesting.

"Yes, that's it. It can't be helped

now. It's gone too far. I'll do the best I can with it—now," thought Celia, as, taking needle and thread, she again made the ascent. She sewed the lace upon the band, and then the beads, one by one, till—it was finished.

"Rub it on the floor. It won't look quite so new. It'll pass unnoticed," the thought prompted.

Having adopted its advice once, to reject it now seemed to make matters worse, if possible.

Celia scrubbed and rubbed the collar. It was a rag now. "I can't never wear it, an'—I'm not sorry for that part. It's the takin' that worries me."

Again the jeers and sneers.

"I'm goin' to tell mother an' end this!"

Black Thought had overreached.

"I've worked so long an' had so little, she'll understand!"

"Think she will?" came cold and hard. "You know she won't! She's honest—believes in God an' all that."

"I couldn't be more unhappy! Mother couldn't say anythin' to make me feel worse! What shall I do? I wonder where God is now?" She sat bolt upright, adding: "God, you've got to help me out!"

The taunting was stilled—for the time. She waited. Her thoughts took shape. "I'll tell mother—with God's help I will! There'll be an end to it that way—some time—no matter how bad she takes it."

Then she thought of Maggy Wilson, who worked near her in the mill. People said Maggy was bad. Celia reflected for the first time: "It isn't easy to be good in that mill, specially when she hasn't a mother or brothers, or no one to be carin' which way." Celia resolved to ask her mother if she couldn't invite Maggy to their house. It must be awful to feel alone and bad. Maggy might feel as Celia felt, with only bad around her all the time.

"I'm goin'," announced Celia to herself.

"She'll want to half kill you, she will!" But it wasn't strong enough to carry weight this time.

In pursuance of her plan, Celia slid down the slats and stood in the kitchen door. It was hard to begin. "If mother would only help me!" she thought.

Mrs. Wicks turned, and, seeing her, ordered: "Celia, get the bread pan an' grease it!"

The opportunity had gone!

She stood quietly upon the braided rug, wondering how she should begin.

"Celia, fetch some wood. Can't you see it's about down to the bottom of the box?"

She obeyed without a protest—a very unusual symptom in any of Mrs. Wick's children, who, while not idle, had a natural tendency to delay.

Then her mother noticed her. She flared out: "Celia, you only work half days in the mill now. I can't see why you leave all the work on me. I'm doin' well for a woman—only, Celia, your mother should be a horse—to do it all—alone!"

Not receiving a reply, a thought was borne in upon Mrs. Wicks' brisk consciousness. "Celia Wicks, you're up to somethin' or other!" she cried.

"Lie—lie quick! Play you're sick!" The thought was back!

"Don't get down the salts or senna, mother," as Mrs. Wicks moved toward the top shelf in the pantry. "It's not that. I'm not sick— Oh, say, mother



"Oh!" came in a soft breath of admiration.

—did you ever in all your life—do somethin'—I mean somethin' awful? Because I—have. I didn't mean to, an' now I've disgraced you all—all of you! An'—you'll never forgive me!" sobbed Celia.

Mrs. Wicks' face had changed to an ashen color.

"What do you mean?" Her voice had a hollow sound. Then, clutching the table for support, she rallied to say: "My room, quick!"

Celia could barely restrain a cry at the crushing force of her mother's hand, which held her arm in a viselike grasp as she hurriedly thrust her within the room and—shot the bolt.

Facing her daughter with a deathlike pallor, she gasped: "Strike now! Out



*"My children are my life, Celia. If one of them went wrong, I'd die!
That's how much I care!"*

with it, Celia Wicks! I've toiled an' gone hungry—borne you in travail. Tell me my reward!" Then, changing suddenly, she wailed: "I can bear this, too! Whisper it, child! Mother'll help you, hide you— Oh, my God! My little Celia!"

"Mother, dearest, don't, please don't take it so hard—like this! I'll pay him or—I'll confess it an' do penance—"

"What are you sayin'?" rasped Mary Wicks unnaturally, her eyes glowing with a hard brilliancy.

"Oh, mother," chokingly responded Celia, "I never wanted the makin's of a dog collar bad enough to steal! I don't know what possessed me! An' you takin' it so hard—"

"Is this the truth—all of it? You're keepin' nothin' from me?" Mrs. Wicks held her daughter's face between her hands as if to search the soul that lay beyond.

"All? Isn't it bad enough?"

For the first time it occurred to Celia to doubt her mother's sanity. She was not consoled by the viselike grip about her knees, where her mother had fallen and was murmuring: "Merciful Father, forgive an' preserve us! I will take better heed—be a better mother to the little ones placed in my care—"

"Mother, why will you? I've confessed to you. Lick me, scold me, but don't—don't— I didn't know how much you cared—"

"Cared! My children are my life, Celia. If one of them went wrong, I'd die! That's how much I care!" And Celia knew she spoke the truth.

"Try to forgive me, ma," said Celia, and the unusual caress from the thin hands, while it soothed, caused Celia to see the worn frame in a new and holier light. She ventured timidly: "I'll pay him, mother—"

"I'll give him a few dinners. I'll make it up to him. Don't fret, child. Always tell me everythin', Celia. I've not felt strong lately—have neglected my children—"

"I just won't let you blame yourself. You're the best mother ever."

"I took the things for you, instead of the mitts, an' was goin' to surprise you. But we'll make it together, now—that dog collar."

"Oh, mother! You do forgive me?"

"Why, that's nothin'," said Mrs. Wicks inconsistently.

Bob's voice and an odor proclaimed: "Ma, ma, where are you? The bread's burned up!"

"The bread! Oh, yerra! Bad cess to it! 'Twas unlucky from the emptin's till it burned to a crisp." Mrs. Wicks reverted to her childhood accent, as she always did in sorrow or joy.

Celia was quietly happy as she marveled at the way of mothers, breathing softly: "So dear and queer is my own!"





POOR PETER

BY

Fred Jackson

Author of "Bars and Bolts," "The Seventh of September," etc

ILLUSTRATED BY R. VAN BUREN

DOCTOR HENRY FILMORE looked up as his office attendant opened the door marked "private," but his casual glance of inquiry became a stare as she closed the door behind her dramatically and announced in tones of awe:

"A gentleman to see you, doctor!"

Excitement was in her bearing—excitement poorly repressed. A strange light gleamed in her eyes—a light almost of triumph. And that her words themselves were fraught with significance, the attitude of the doctor bore witness. He sat motionless, his finger still marking his place in the newest French detective story, his eyes frankly incredulous.

"A patient or a bill collector, Miss Nolan?" he asked calmly.

Miss Nolan drew a long breath.

"I think he's a patient, doctor," she said. "He *must* be—although he looks healthy enough. You never can tell. And I'm certain he's not a bill collector. He's a handsome young man, sir, and he looks *rich*!"

Doctor Filmore came to. Hastily he dropped the detective novel into a half-open drawer of his brand-new desk, where it was completely hidden; hastily he donned an eye shade of green stuff, and reached for some culture slides. Then, having switched on the

strongest electric lamp at hand, he busied himself in gravely inspecting the tiny oblongs of glass.

"Show him in, Miss Nolan, please," said Doctor Filmore, his preparations completed.

Miss Nolan passed out, and evidently informed the handsome young man who looked rich that the doctor would see him, for an instant later the door marked "private" opened and closed again after the newcomer. Doctor Filmore did not at once look up. His was the mien of a man whose shoulders sagged beneath the burdens of the universe. His concentration upon the matter that engrossed him was so tremendous that the other gentleman drew quite close without disturbing him.

"I say there—wake up, old pillbox!"

With a grunt of disappointment, Doctor Filmore looked up. And disgustedly, wrathfully, he tore the green eye shade from his brow.

"Good Lord! It's you, is it?" he cried.

The handsome young gentleman who looked rich gazed back in mild surprise at the irate medico.

"Yes, it's I, it is," he answered. "Peter Schermerhorn Nelson, to be explicit. I must say you don't seem overjoyed at my friendly little visit."

That he was in nowise concerned,

however, he indicated by dropping into the brand-new consultant's chair.

"I thought you were a patient, that's all," explained Doctor Filmore, replacing the culture slides and switching off the strongest lamp. "Miss Nolan misled me, and I exerted myself to look busy. Glad as I am to see you, Peter, old boy, I don't mind admitting, in confidence, that a patient would have made me gladder."

"The sicker, the better, I suppose," said Mr. Nelson. "What butchers you are—you doctors!"

"You wrong us, Peter," said Doctor Filmore. "You wrong me, anyway. I'm not a butcher. I haven't had a chance to be."

"So?" said Peter sympathetically. "That's the rub, is it? Victims slow in finding you out?"

Doctor Filmore produced his cigarette case and offered it.

"Peter," said he, "the luck I've had would discourage even you. I've been in this damned office now for a month and a half, mornings from nine-thirty until eleven-thirty, afternoons from two-thirty until five-thirty. I haven't missed a single day—not even Sunday. And I've been simply bored to death, and lonely as the very devil. I've read every magazine published. I've read all the books in the nearest circulating library. I've even attempted solitaire. I tell you, Peter, if it keeps up much longer, I'm going to sell my brand-new furniture and instruments and give up the game."

"Rot!" said Peter, shaking his head and looking about him interestedly. "Have some sand, fellow! Don't lie down and cry 'licked' at the very beginning. If things don't come your way, make 'em, by gee!"

Doctor Filmore smiled.

"That's all very well," he said. "It sounds bully. But it isn't possible in this business. One has ethics to consider. One can't advertise, as in any

other line. One has simply got to sit around and wait for fortune to smile."

"Bosh!" said Mr. Nelson. He looked about him cautiously. Then he leaned forward and tapped Doctor Filmore on the arm.

"Henry," said he, "I had a pretty good idea how things were going with you. That's why I'm here. If you've an ounce of gray matter under your hair, I can help you to get on your feet professionally."

Doctor Filmore hesitated.

"Frankly, I'm wary of you, Peter," he said. "You've such a ferocious appetite for skylarking. But what's the idea? I suppose it'll do no harm to hear it. If you can do what you claim, I'll certainly be yours to command."

Peter nodded.

"I can do it, all right. And here's how," he answered confidently. "I'm a sick man, Henry. I'm about as sick as a man can be without losing his appetite and his good looks and his five senses. Now what's the matter with me?"

Doctor Filmore looked dazed.

"You're crazy, I dare say," he ventured.

"Listen!" said Peter. "This afternoon I was driving up Broadway in my new runabout. Have you seen it? Ninety horse! Eight cylinders! A French Giardot!"

"No, I haven't," answered Doctor Filmore. "What has that got to do—"

"Nothing," interrupted Nelson. "I was driving uptown in it—alone. You know what the traffic laws are lately and how the cops keep a malicious eye on me? Well, I was simply creeping along by that cop at Forty-sixth Street. He's gotten me twice, you know, for one thing or another. I was crawling along there next to the curb, and never having the least premonition of what was going to happen, when suddenly I saw on the corner, waiting for a car



"And how do you suppose I'm going to keep secret the fact that you are not really ill? Suppose that story leaks out in the newspapers?"

—the most wonderful-looking girl that I ever saw in my life."

Doctor Filmore threw himself back in his chair and growled out in utter disgust:

"Well, I'm damned!"

"Henry," went on Mr. Nelson enthusiastically, warming to his subject and entirely ignoring the doctor, "she was a dream! I've known a few girls in my time, you'll admit, and I've chased a few peaches. But *this* girl was just about the stunningest thing that ever lived. When I saw her, Henry, my heart stopped beating."

"It ought to have," said Doctor Filmore, "if it didn't. How you have the blooming audacity to sit there and tell me all this stuff—you—an engaged young man! By gad, you're a rotter, Pete!"

"Hear me to the end," said Peter, frowning, "and stop calling names. You know perfectly well that Marion and I care absolutely nothing for each other. We've merely agreed to go through with the marriage thing to please our families. But I'd as soon think of falling in love with Marion as I'd think of falling in love with the

Venus of Milo. She's simply too far above me, Henry. When I kiss her, I feel like a scoundrel robbing a church. Marion's a saint, Henry."

"You realize that, do you?" asked Doctor Filmore angrily.

"Of course I do—strongly. It'd be an awful thing to let a girl like that marry a fellow like me, Henry. It'd be a fortunate thing for her if she got rid of me. That's why I had no scruples against following this girl."

"Following her?" gasped Filmore. "You followed her?"

"I did," said Nelson. "One look simply bowled me over, Henry. She was the *stunningest* thing——"

"So you said before," growled Filmore, interrupting.

"You think I'm exaggerating," said Nelson, "but wait until you see her."

"Until I see her?" repeated the doctor. "What in thunder do you mean? What are you getting at, anyway?"

"I'll make all that plain to you in an instant," said Peter. "You see—I just took one look and I said to myself, 'Pete, old horse, if you let this opportunity slip by, you'll never cease to regret it. That's the one girl in the world that could make you happy, steady you down, make a man of you. Fate arranged for you to be here today at this very minute in order to see her. But now fate is through. It's up to you to follow up your advantage.'"

"Very interesting," said Doctor Filmore. "Whereupon you followed her?"

"I did," said Peter. "I pulled up at the curb, stopped my engine, took the switch key, and abandoned the runabout. And I just got across the street in time to jump the same car that she got."

"Well? What happened?"

"Nothing," said Peter. "She had a suit case and a magazine. By the time I had paid my nickel and passed into the car, some one had given her a seat and she was absorbed in a story.

She was even prettier on closer inspection. Her skin is really astonishing. And her lashes—and her hair——"

"In fact, her whole face and form," said the doctor.

"Exactly. I speak with the assurance of knowledge, for I had the privilege of regarding her all the way from Forty-sixth Street to Seventy-second."

"She got off at Seventy-second, then?"

"Yes. Without once glancing my way. I was glad of that, for it enabled me to go on following without attracting her attention. Guess where she was going?"

"How in thunder should I know?"

"To the Nurses' Home!" cried Mr. Nelson. "I followed her to the door. She let herself in with a latchkey."

"So she is a nurse, eh?" said the doctor for want of something more intelligent to say.

"She is," said Peter. "Now do you begin to get my scheme?"

"What scheme?" asked Filmore, opening his eyes.

"My scheme for meeting her and making your reputation professionally."

"I don't," said Filmore. "Nor did I know that your plan to help me to success had anything to do with your flirtations. But I might have guessed that there was something behind your interest in my affairs."

"Now don't be unpleasant and ungrateful," said Peter. "Here is the idea in a nutshell. I am suddenly seized with an attack of illness. You can make it as severe as you like, and as serious—providing I can retain my good looks and my five senses. I summon you—my friend as well as my physician. You order me to get a nurse."

"So that's it, is it?" gasped Filmore.

"The one I saw to-day is obtained. During my convalescence I get to know her. I make love to her. She accepts me. I break with Marion and marry

her. In the meantime you effect a marvellous cure—and win a reputation. And we all live happily ever afterward."

He stopped, and regarded Filmore proudly. Filmore gazed back, speechless with astonishment and disgust.

"Well, of all the far-fetched, outrageous, impossible absurdities!" he cried at last. "Peter, you're almost funny!"

"Why?" asked Mr. Nelson blandly. "What's wrong?"

"Do you suppose for one moment I'd lend myself to such a preposterous, disgraceful hoax? Do you suppose I'd jeopardize my professional career by involving myself in such a reprehensible proceeding? You must be—crazy, Peter!"

"I am," said Peter frankly. "I'm crazy over this girl."

"It's evident," growled Filmore.

Peter rose and began to pace the floor.

"The trouble with you, Henry, is—that you don't know how to help yourself," he announced quietly. "You're timid. You've got no ingenuity—no go—no push. If you sat here for thirty years and no patients turned up, you'd just meekly quit. You wouldn't turn a hand to alter conditions."

"You don't understand," said Filmore. "There's nothing one can do, I tell you."

"Of course there is," said Peter. "There are lots of things one can do. One can get one's name before the public—prominently. There are more ways of advertising than just buying paid space in the papers. Don't you know Sir Thomas Lipton's yacht racing has sold more tea than all the paid-space advertising anybody ever did? I'm showing you one way to make yourself known. Steer me through a severe attack of something or other. I'm a personage, you know, Henry. I'm a millionaire. And a polo champion. And a motor maniac. And an aëro-

naut. I'm awfully well known all over America."

Filmore was silent. He was also thoughtful.

"Suppose," said Peter, "it leaked out that I'd been taken suddenly ill? The newspapers would be interested. They'd send reporters to my place to investigate. My servants would have orders to refer all inquiries to my physician, Doctor Henry Filmore. The reporters would accordingly come to you—and in all of the write-ups they'd say, 'Mr. Nelson's physician, Doctor Henry Filmore, of 99999 Madison Avenue, says —' or, 'Doctor Henry Filmore, Mr. Nelson's physician, assures us—' Why, it's a pipe, Henry! All you have to do is to announce that I'm dying, at first—then let me gradually get better. The cure will be a miracle—nothing less. *Your* reputation will be made—"

"And how do you suppose I'm going to keep secret the fact that you are not really ill? Suppose that story leaks out in the newspapers?"

"It won't. You'll select a disease, tell me what the symptoms are, and I'll have it."

Doctor Filmore now rose, and began to pace the floor.

"It's impossible!" he protested weakly. "Impossible!"

"It isn't," answered Peter. "But while you're dillydallying here, it may become inadvisable. If some other doctor engages my nurse, the deal's off. You know that, don't you? I'm not going to be sick just to be penned up with some other female."

Filmore turned.

"How can I be sure of getting you the one you want, even now?" he asked.

"You'll have to say that I'm a cranky patient and want to take my pick. You'll have to send for all the idle ones in the place."

"You wouldn't be able to be very



P. A. 3

"It's the one in the chair—there by the marble figure," he whispered excitedly to Filmore.
 "How will you get her—and get rid of the rest?"

ill if you could sit up and choose your nurse," said Filmore.

"That's just it. You'll have to choose an illness that will leave me possessed of all of my faculties. For instance——"

"Toothache," suggested Filmore sarcastically.

Peter ignored him. He was deep in thought.

"I'd need my eyes to see her," he said meditatively. "I'd need my appe-

tite to keep me alive. I'd need my mouth—to talk to her, and my ears to hear her answer, and my arms to hug her—if things go well. But I could manage without my legs. Make it a disease of the legs, can't you? There must be something that would keep me from walking about, but that would enable me to sit up and be an interesting invalid in a wheel chair. That would account for my having a nurse, too. She could wheel me about, read to me, and write my letters—all that, you know."

Doctor Filmore brightened visibly.

"You might have paralysis," he suggested. "Patients usually are kept in bed with it—flat on their backs—but I could pretend to be working on a new system. You could have paralysis of the lower limbs."

"Would there be much bitter medicine to swallow?" asked Nelson.

"No. We could get around that."

"Would your cure of me be an achievement that would distinguish you from the rest of your profession?"

"It might be," answered Filmore.

"But could you manage it within a reasonable length of time?"

"Undoubtedly."

"Then I'll have paralysis—of the lower limbs," agreed Nelson. "What brought it on, though, do you suppose? I'm a nice young fellow, only twenty-six, you know, with a splendid physique and a good family history."

"You must have incurred some injury to the spine at some period," decided Filmore. "Perhaps in playing polo——"

"Right!" agreed Nelson. "I've been knocked out five or six times. And I've had accidents at football, too—and with my cars! Dear me! To think that this should crop up now! After all these years!"

"You're bound to give the trick away," said the doctor, throwing himself back in his swivel chair again. "I

daren't risk it. This is only a lark to you, Peter, but it's my career, you know."

"Rot! You can depend upon me," protested Peter. "No danger of my giving the snap away. Why—it means more than a career to me. It means my whole future happiness, Henry."

"If I'm such an ass as to do this mad thing," said Henry Filmore, "you've got to give me your word of honor as a gentleman not to breathe the truth to a single soul. You've got to swear by all you hold sacred not to communicate the truth to any one in any way!"

"I will," said Peter. "I agree. I both swear and give you my word as a gentleman of honor. Does that satisfy you?"

"Ye-es," answered Doctor Filmore slowly.

"Good! Ring the Nurses' Home, then. Where's the telephone book? I'll find the number."

"Wait!" protested the doctor as Nelson began looking about him anxiously. "You've got to be home in bed, you know."

"In a wheel chair," corrected Peter. "I'll go home directly you've phoned, and I'll buy a nice, comfortable wheel chair on the way."

"But your servants will be on to us, then. Don't you realize that?"

"No, they needn't. We'll say I was struck down suddenly. I suppose we'll have to confide in my valet. He's around so much he's apt to guess, anyway. And I'll want to use my legs now and then."

"Absolutely not," responded Filmore decidedly. "I'll not consider the matter if you propose to take your man into your confidence."

"Stuff and nonsense!" cried Peter. "I've had him ten years. He was my father's valet before he was mine. He's the next thing to one of the family.

Come on! The number's Columbus 01017."

Doctor Filmore turned to his desk phone reluctantly.

"God help us, Peter!" he said. "You will have your own way at any cost!"

Peter Schermerhorn Nelson beamed.

"It's usually the best way," he said.

Doctor Filmore lifted the receiver with a grunt and called Columbus 01017. And when he was presently connected, he said gravely:

"This is Doctor Filmore. Have you any nurses in at the moment, please?"

"Yes," answered the voice at the other end of the wire. "Who did you say this was, please?"

"Doctor Filmore. Doctor Henry Filmore, Madison Avenue."

"Oh, yes, doctor," said the woman, who had, of course, never heard of him in her life before.

"I have a very wealthy patient," explained Doctor Filmore, "suffering from paralysis of the lower limbs. He wants a nurse to attend him, to read to him, write his letters, and superintend his diet. She must be young, you know, and presentable. He's very discriminating and hard to please. His man has taken a course in massage and sees to that end of the treatment. The

duties of the nurse would be light and agreeable. Perhaps more like the services of a secretary. Do you think you have any one likely to suit?"

At the end of this long speech, Doctor Filmore drew a long breath, and Peter, listening, gave him a nod of approval. The woman at the other end of the wire answered:

"Well, of course it's hard to say. But there are four or five nurses in now. Perhaps you would stop in and



"I don't want this trouble to prey on his mind. Do your best to keep him cheerful and optimistic."

see them, doctor—or let them come to your office?"

"Send them to me," said Filmore. "But not to my office. I'm leaving now for the rooms of my patient. You might send your nurses to me there. The address is Hollenden Court, Fifth Avenue and Fifty-eighth Street. Ask for Mr. Nelson's apartments."

"Mr. Nelson's apartments, Hollenden Court, Fifth Avenue and Fifty-eighth Street," repeated the woman on the wire. "Yes, doctor."

"No secretarial training is necessary," added Filmore. "A pleasing personality, good appearance, and youth are all that will be required. A young woman companion is really what Mr. Nelson requires, but he prefers to employ a trained nurse in case of emergencies. You understand?"

"Perfectly, doctor," answered Columbus 01017.

Doctor Filmore rehung the receiver and turned to Nelson. Peter was flushed and radiant.

"There, you scoundrel!" cried Filmore. "The fatal step is taken. Heaven help my reputation if anything goes amiss!"

II.

Upon Filmore's advice, the attack of paralysis came on at the doctor's office. Mr. Nelson's valet, Saunders by name, was hastily summoned to aid in removing his master to his own rooms. A telephone call went out, too, to the proper quarter for a wheel chair. And by the time Peter Nelson was helped out to a cab—driven to his rooms—and literally carried in—the wheel chair had arrived by special delivery.

Gazing about him critically, Peter decided that his sitting room offered the most interesting background for his attack. He had some really nice things in it, for it had been done by a most expensive and reliable decorating concern, in an early Italian style. It was

a man's room, however, and it looked tremendously virile and mannish.

When Peter had arrayed himself artistically in a brown velvet lounge robe, and had taken his place in his chair, with a brown rug over his—for the moment—helpless limbs, he sent Saunders and Doctor Filmore flying for the necessary properties to heighten his effect of helplessness. Flowers were ordered from the nearest shop—big vases of cut flowers, flowering plants, palms, and ferns.

"To bring me close to the outdoors, where I can no longer roam at will," explained Peter sadly.

Some new books and some magazines were suggested by Filmore. These were placed on the stand at Peter's elbow. A desk pad, too, was there—and a desk board and pack of cards for "solitaire." The newspapers were artistically crumpled.

The chair itself was placed near the big front windows, so that Peter could wistfully watch the avenue below. And Filmore was made to try various positions, as invalid, so that Peter could watch from the doorway and decide upon the most effective.

Their preparations were hardly completed when the bevy of nurses arrived. There were six in all, six young, strong, healthy young women, any of whom ought to have contented the most finical of patients. But Peter, peeping through the curtains into the foyer where they were waiting, had scarcely a glance for five of the six. For the One—that he had fancied so tremendously was there—still in her little blue suit with its big white collar, and her little blue hat with its tall black feather. She had seated herself in a huge armchair, relaxing in it as if she were tired, and at the very moment that Nelson peeped, she was in the act of yawning.

It is a delight to see that sort of person yawn. Behind one very capable, very shapely little hand—ringless,

he noticed at once—she tried to shield—but succeeded very badly—her open mouth of seductive curves, her even white teeth of amazing soundness. Mr. Nelson breathed deeply as he observed these things—likewise the length of her downcast brown lashes and the dimple in her chin.

"It's the one in the chair—there by the marble figures," he whispered excitedly to Filmore. "How will you get her—and get rid of the rest?"

"I'll manage it," whispered Filmore in return. "Go back and get set. Hurry!"

Peter thereupon tiptoed back to his invalid's chair and suffered Saunders to tuck him in and adjust his pillows. Doctor Filmore passed through the portières into the foyer and nodded to the nurses, his eyes sweeping around the group.

As he discovered the little one in the chair, his eyes lingered an instant reflectively, and he spoke:

"You are a trained nurse?"

"Yes," said the tired girl, coming to attention.

"What is your name, please?"

"Grace Shannon," answered the girl simply.

"Will you come in, Miss Shannon, and let me present you to Mr. Nelson?"

She rose at once, and followed him.

Passing through the heavy portières, Miss Shannon found herself in the most astonishing room she had ever seen in her life. It was all golden browns—golden-brown woodwork, golden-brown furniture, golden-brown-tapestried walls, golden-brown rugs. There were minor notes, of course—touches of black and yellow and even deep ruby red—and the flowers that seemed to be everywhere were of varied hues. But the main color scheme of the room was golden brown, and the patient who sat in his wheel chair by the window was a golden-brown man. His hair was

gold. His skin was browned by the sun and wind. His eyes were brown, too. And they were very eager, wistful eyes. He wore a brown lounge robe. And his brown hands were folded upon the brown rug covering his feet.

She came forward slowly, her heart swelling with sudden pity for this huge, masterful, out-of-doors man, so cruelly imprisoned here.

"This is Miss Shannon," said Doctor Filmore. "Mr. Nelson, Miss Shannon."

She advanced and gave him her hand as Filmore drew up a chair—and he engulfed it in both of his.

"You are a trained nurse, Miss Shannon?" asked Mr. Nelson. "Pardon my not rising, won't you?"

"Yes," said the girl, her blue eyes wells of sympathy.

"Miss Shannon," said Peter, leaning toward her, "Doctor Filmore tells me I'm in for a siege of it this time. There's no telling *when* I'm going to get up on my feet again—and out. And I simply couldn't stand it—if I had to be left alone here."

She nodded, but said nothing.

"Do you think you could endure a big dose of me?" he asked. "Hours and hours of my society? I'm apt to be peevish and irritable at times—even grouchy. But I'll try my darndest to be good. Do you feel inclined to take me on? All you'll have to do is to keep me company, and hand me things and read to me or talk to me. My man is so confounded clumsy about—and anything but interesting."

"I should like to come," said Grace Shannon sincerely. Indeed, to live even for a little while in this atmosphere of wealth and splendor, to comfort this good-looking man, and to get another case so soon—such an easy case and one that promised to last—all this was *luck* to Gracie.

"Thank you," said Peter. And, turning to Doctor Filmore, who had moved off and was staring out of the window



"In a way," observed Mr. Nelson, "being an invalid is going to be rather convenient. What a lot of tiresome entertainments I shall be able to escape!"

grimly, Peter added: "Miss Shannon is engaged, doctor. Will you dismiss the others, please, and—tell Saunders to send them back in my car?"

Miss Shannon rose.

"Shall I go back for my suit case?" she asked. "Or did you want me to stay now? I have no uniform with me."

"My chauffeur can bring back what-

ever you need," said Peter. "I should prefer you to stay now—even without a uniform for the moment."

She inclined her head.

"Very well. I'll tell one of the other girls what to send me."

Mr. Nelson relaxed in his chair with a sigh. Miss Shannon followed Filmore into the foyer. There, after she had given her orders to her roommate,

and after the nurses had all gone, Doctor Filmore explained to her something about the case.

"Mr. Nelson was hurt on the polo field several years ago," he said, "but no serious effects appeared for some time. Lately, however, he has had increasing trouble in locomotion. This morning, while in my office, he became suddenly paralyzed and had to be brought here. It was at my suggestion that a nurse was obtained to serve as companion. I don't want this trouble to prey on his mind. Do your best to keep him cheerful and optimistic. For the rest, Saunders, his valet, will attend him, giving the massage treatment, passive treatment, and so on. All you will have to do is to keep him company and see that he is properly nourished. Do you understand?"

"Yes, doctor," said Gracie Shannon.

Her good luck made her heart simply race. To think she was to be paid—for that! Just for spending her days with that handsome, unfortunate young man! It occurred to her that many girls would like the job *without* pay.

But back in the sitting room again, when she had taken off her hat and jacket, had loosened her hair, and powdered her nose, she felt wicked to be rejoicing, when her good fortune was due to Mr. Nelson's sad mishap.

As she took her seat opposite him, and he smiled at her cheerfully, she felt tears welling up in her eyes—tears for his youth and his helplessness. But of course that would never do. She banished them resolutely and smiled back.

Doctor Filmore had gone. Mr. Nelson and his nurse were left alone together.

"Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. Nelson?" asked Gracie as the silence lengthened and they sat gravely looking at each other.

"Aren't you tired?" he asked hesitatingly. "You *look* tired."

"Do I?" asked Gracie anxiously. "I

suppose that's natural enough, though. I haven't had much sleep lately. I had a night serve, and there were children in the house. So I didn't get much sleep during the day. My room was near the nursery."

"I should think you would have gone home to sleep, then," said he.

"I could have," said she, "but I didn't want to go to the expense. I didn't have to pay where I was, of course. I should have had to at the home—and I've two little sisters at school. They need every cent I can scrape together."

"I see," said Peter, nodding.

Miss Shannon waited. But as he did not speak again, she ventured:

"*Was* there something you wanted me to do?"

"Well," said he, "if you don't mind, I wish you'd send off a few wires for me. They're very important."

"Certainly," said Gracie, rising. "Shall I phone them?"

"No, call a messenger, please. I'd much rather send them written down."

Gracie went to the telephone and summoned a boy, and Nelson lay back lazily and watched her, his brown eyes hidden by lowered lashes, and listened to the musical cadences of her voice. She was even sweeter and more exquisite than he had hoped she would be. He reveled in the knowledge that for days and days indefinitely he was to have her here—all to himself. The fact that his legs began to hurt from being held still did not in the least temper his happiness.

"Have you paper and pencil—or pen and ink anywhere near?" asked Miss Shannon, terminating her phone call and turning round to him.

"Yes," he answered. "You'll find telegraph blanks in that big table drawer—and I've pen and ink here in my lap desk."

She found the blanks, came back, and possessed herself of the pad. Then

she sat down near him, and waited. Mr. Nelson reached out and rang the bell near him.

"Saunders," he said as that worthy appeared, "bring me my address book, and my engagement book."

"Yes, sir," said Saunders, departing.

"In a way," observed Mr. Nelson, "being an invalid is going to be rather convenient. What a lot of tiresome entertainments I shall be able to escape!"

Miss Shannon opened wide blue eyes at him and wondered how such a thing could possibly console him. But she said nothing. Personally, she could not conceive of finding any sort of entertainment tiresome.

Saunders reappeared with the two books. The address book Mr. Nelson laid upon his knees. It was quite large and thick. The engagement book was smaller. He held it in his hand.

"This is——" he began absently.

"Tuesday, the twentieth of September," answered Miss Shannon.

"Thank you," said he. And then he mumbled: "Twentieth—twentieth—Tuesday. Here we are!"

He opened the book to the right page.

"Vanderpoel's—tea—five," he read out. "I'll have to wire about that. I promised Natalie I'd surely turn up and show her the 'fascination.' It's a new step for the waltz. Do you know it?"

"No-o," said Gracie. "I don't get much time to dance."

"Do you like it, though?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!" said Gracie.

"So do I," he answered enthusiastically. "I'll teach you the 'fascination' some time. You'll——"

He stopped, struck by her expression. Then he remembered.

"When you're better," said Gracie gently, "I should *love* to learn. Was it Miss Vanderpoel you meant to wire?"

"Yes," said Peter. "Miss Natalie Vanderpoel. I forgot the number.

We'll look it up later. It's on Fifth Avenue."

"I dare say just Fifth Avenue will do," said she. "Miss Natalie Vanderpoel, Fifth Avenue, New York?"

"Mr. Peter Schermerhorn Nelson will be unable to keep his appointment for this afternoon on account of illness. He desires to offer his sincerest regrets."

"Yes," said Miss Shannon. "His sincerest regrets. Signed?"

"No," said Peter. "Unsigned."

She tore off that sheet and looked up.

"Any more?" she asked.

"Indeed there are—heaps and heaps," he answered. "Mrs. Daniel R. Caverly, Sixty-third Street."

"Yes," said Gracie.

"Mr. Peter Schermerhorn Nelson regrets that he will be unable to dine with Mrs. Caverly this evening, on account of illness."

"Yes," said Gracie.

"Miss Marion Rockland, Fifth Avenue and Seventieth Street. Must call off riding date for to-morrow. Can't possibly manage it. Letter of explanation following—Peter."

Miss Shannon looked up sympathetically. Peter's voice had softened.

"Do you ride?" asked Peter.

"I've only ridden once, but I *loved* it," she answered.

"I've a stable full of riding horses at Merrydale," said he, "and one little mare, named Pocahontas, that would just suit you. Some day you must come out there and try her."

"Oh, I *should* like that!" cried Miss Shannon happily.

"When I'm on my feet again," he added. And her heart sank at the thought that this might never be.

She bent her head over the lap desk. He gazed at her blissfully, until she recovered herself at last and looked up with:

"Are there any more wires?" after she
"Yes—do you mind?"
te,

"No, indeed!"

Whereupon he continued to read off names and addresses and to dictate regrets for dinners, dances, theater parties, receptions, musicales, and the like. For two weeks ahead he cleared the slate. And Gracie Shannon, listening, writing busily, sat spellbound at the thought of the enchanted life this man must have led. The names that she wrote down were names she had often seen in the society column and under pictures in the newspapers. They were the names that one sees in the list of box holders at the opera, the names one sees among the owners of exhibits at the horse show.

The messenger boy arrived before they had completely finished, but he was made to wait until they were through. Then off went the thick batch of wires, and, Miss Shannon—coming back from the door, whence she had escorted the messenger—was ordered to repair instantly to the couch and lie down. It was in vain that she protested. Mr. Nelson informed her that he wanted to read and didn't want to be disturbed; and read he did—as long as she watched him. But when she finally closed her eyes and fell asleep, he put away his book, ceased shamming, and sat gazing across the room at her—delightedly.

To gaze upon her at all was a joy. To gaze upon her coiled up asleep upon his own lounge, in his own private sitting room, was almost more than Mr. Nelson could endure quietly. With her head pillowed on her arm, her lips a bit apart, her hair loosened, her thick dark lashes hiding her eyes, she was really a beauty. The most unappreciative man in the world must have admitted it. And Mr. Nelson was far from unappreciative. He had admired many ladies in his day, although he was only twenty-six. He had begun young. But he had *never* admired any one as he already admired Gracie Shannon.

He thought of having her always near him—of riding with her through the fresh woodlands of Merrydale—of dancing with her over a thousand polished ballroom floors—of dining with her and lunching with her and *breakfasting* with her—of talking with her and laughing with her. It seemed a dream too wonderful for realization.

She must have been very tired, for she slept until tea time, without once stirring—and this in spite of the fact that the telephone rang a good deal. As Peter's wires began to be delivered, people began calling up to inquire how ill he was and just what his ailment was. Saunders, who answered the phone, reported in each case that Mr. Nelson had been stricken suddenly, that he believed the attack was paralysis, that Doctor Filmore was in charge, and that all inquiries might be answered more fully by the physician.

It was just as well thereafter that Doctor Henry Filmore was not a busy man, for such persons as were not interested in Peter personally were interested in the news value of the affair. By dinner time Peter's paralysis was the topic of conversation at innumerable dinner tables and at innumerable clubs. Peter's fiancée, Marion Rockland, had had no hint of his illness from the wire she received, but at Natalie Vanderpoel's she had the privilege of reading Natalie's wire. Immediately, then, she phoned Peter's apartment and Doctor Filmore. Unsatisfied with what she was able to learn from those sources, she set out for Peter's herself—only to be stopped at the door with the announcement:

"Mr. Nelson may see no one."

"But I am going to marry him!" cried Marion. "Surely I may see him."

"No, madam," returned Saunders. "The doctor's orders were most explicit, madam. No one may see him."

Marion drove off to Filmore's office

and pleaded with him. But he remained regretfully adamant.

"It is my *right* to be with him," cried Marion. "It is my duty to nurse him. My place is by his bedside."

"He is in the hands of professional nurses, Miss Rockland," Filmore assured her. "All that can be done for him is being done."

Marion was compelled to be content with that. She broke her engagements and stayed at home, and instantly she became the most interesting person in town. People flocked to see how she was taking the blow. People wanted to see just how much she really cared for Peter Nelson.

The papers, of course, printed columns about the affair, published bulletins and photographs. It was a big story for them—"Young Millionaire Stricken on Eve of Wedding."

Meanwhile, Gracie Shannon and Peter were getting on nicely together. When she learned that Peter was engaged, naturally Miss Shannon's sympathy for him deepened. It seemed nothing less than a tragedy to her—that he should be in love with a girl and unable to marry her because of this affliction. She treated Peter even more sweetly than before—and Peter seemed grateful.

He wrote to Marion the second day and submitted the letter to his nurse to read before he sent it.

"You are a woman," he said. "You can tell me if I've said anything in it to hurt her."

"Absolutely nothing," cried Gracie, when she had read it through. "I think you are very noble, Mr. Nelson."

This is what Peter had written:

MY DEAR MARION: No doubt the news of my illness surprised you. I was hardly prepared for it myself, as it came quite suddenly and almost without preliminary symptoms. Now, Filmore informs me that it is extremely likely I shall never walk again. There is a slight chance of my recovery. He holds that out to me, to keep

my spirits up, no doubt. But as things stand, there is but one course open to me, Marion, in reference to our engagement. I release you, fully and freely, of my own volition. Under the circumstances, it is impossible for me to marry you, and for you to wait until my—problematical—recovery would be foolish.

I feel sure you will find happiness with some other fellow—greater happiness, perhaps, than I could have brought you, for I never was worthy of you, Marion, and I have always known it, and I think your family was always keener for the match than you were. I'm not saying this to hurt you, but to convince you that the breaking of our engagement will not ruin your life, but, instead, may possibly give you a real chance for happiness.

So put me out of your thoughts, Marion, as I am already out of your life, and forget that I might have been anything to you. I am being well taken care of—and am facing my problem with fortitude. Always sincerely yours,

PETER SCHERMERHORN NELSON.

In reply, Marion wrote:

MY DEAR PETER: It is fine of you to think of releasing me, but I will not be released. If your condition does not improve, I will marry you in spite of it. I am impatiently awaiting the doctor's permission to come to you. MARION.

Several more letters passed back and forth between them before Marion finally accepted her freedom reluctantly, and Peter felt at liberty to address himself to Gracie.

That they should fall deeply in love with each other was a foregone conclusion. He proposed to her before he "recovered," and she accepted him, thinking that she would have to nurse him all her life. If that isn't true love, I should like to know what is.

They were not married, however, until after he had learned to walk again.

To this day Gracie has no idea that he wasn't really ill. Nobody has. Society thinks Peter Schermerhorn Nelson married his nurse out of gratitude, while Marion consoled herself with Doctor Filmore. And the doctor's many patients little suspect how that famous physician got his start in life.



Correcting Defects of the Shoulders and Bust

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

MANY protests have been uttered, and much has been written by hygienists, physicians, and beauty lovers upon the ridiculous "débutante slouch" assumed by young women for a year or more. Happily it is not quite so exaggerated as it has been, but this absurd whim has, by assiduous cultivation, created a habit of carriage that has entirely destroyed the most distinguishing marks of feminine beauty in many growing girls and young women.

What are these? In connection with a graceful bearing, which this hideously awkward pose and shuffle make impossible, the most distinguishing features of womanhood are a soft, firm throat and a well-rounded, gently swelling bosom. The "slouch" throws the upper portion of the body and head forward, causing round shoulders, hollow chests, curved spines, weak lungs, poor circulation, poorly developed muscles, and a train of lesser evils. With the head sinking into the bosom, the structures of the throat are weakened; and while freedom from tight collars has improved the neck a great deal, it is by no means the firm, beautiful column it could become if the head were properly poised.

It goes without saying that this is entirely out of the question so long as drooping, slouching shoulders are encouraged; this is the first thing to be corrected. It will not be easy to carry the shoulders properly when the stoop has been acquired; assistance in the shape of a constant reminder must be resorted to, and for this purpose simple shoulder straps will prove effectual.

A strip of stout muslin, two or three inches wide and two yards long, should be placed around the neck, the ends brought forward and passed around the arms under the shoulders, crossed in back, and again brought forward at a high waistline and fastened in front with small safety pins.

An exercise to be used in conjunction with this simple device consists in shaking hands with oneself behind one's own back. Short-armed people—who need it most, as they are usually round-shouldered—may never be able to do more than approximate their finger tips; the loose or limber-jointed will find it comparatively easy to clasp their hands behind, but almost every one, especially after reaching full maturity, will find the exercise illustrated somewhat diffi-

cult without practice. But it is one of the simplest and best exercises for strengthening the shoulders; it forces into play the muscles of the arms, chest, and back, and brings out unsuspected weaknesses in these tissues, as well as of the *joints* of the shoulders and elbows, which in many are so seldom exercised that they become stiff.

Nothing is more unsightly than the aforesaid slouch of the shoulders, and nothing should be more studiously avoided and more sedulously guarded against. The shoulder strap can be worn constantly, and the exercise indulged in as often as time permits. By these means correct shoulder carriage will soon be acquired. Upon this depends a well-poised head.

Having laid the foundation, the next step is to cover the bony structure with well-padded muscles.

A well-known physician puts it thus: "Strong muscles are needful for maintaining the spinal column and shoulders erect, thus giving a good carriage to the head. A weak condition of the muscles assures round shoulders and awkwardness of movement, which together seriously detract from any graces of countenance."

The popular "slouch" destroys those muscles which give to the upper chest its beauty of outline, and which, when strong and well nourished, form a base

upon which to develop the firm, rounded bust so essentially feminine and so ardently desired by most women. It is impossible to build up gently swelling, well-rounded breasts upon hollow chests and thin chest walls.

It has become a matter of actual concern to those interested in the healthy development of beautiful womanhood to observe the broken-down breasts quite common now even in young girls, consequent upon the freakish attitudes which they foolishly cultivate and term "fashionable."

Another error into which fashion has led many women, and which is equally destructive to the firmness of the bust, is the low corset worn without a brassière; but we will take this up farther on.

Emphasis cannot be too strongly placed upon the dependence of bodily attractiveness upon a well-arched thorax. Broad shoulders and strong muscles in men denote manly vigor; they are not desirable in women, but the

roundness, the *arch* of the chest, is. When the shoulders droop or slump, the chest is caved in; whereas the ribs and breastbone are held up and out by the correct carriage of the shoulders. A well-arched thorax, then, affords the breasts a better position and surface, and also determines the outward form of the whole bust.



A support should be worn at all times—even during sleep.

The lovely line between the breast and shoulder depends on three things: the pectoral muscles—that layer of flesh which runs from the chest bone to the shoulder and upper arm, a padding—moderate—of fat, and a firm breast. In considering this exquisite mark of beauty, the important rôle played by the shoulders will at once be seen. When the upper part of the chest is too broad, it may actually be disfiguring. The broad, flat chest is common among Anglo-Saxons. When the shoulders resemble isolated, winglike structures, they are fatal to beauty; while those that are narrow and hollowed out have a poverty-stricken appearance. All of these types lack the lovely line referred to above.

Beautifully modeled shoulders can be acquired by the exercise illustrated; also by such movements as develop more especially the deltoid muscle, which gives to the upper arm and shoulder its roundness, its artistic contour. Any household tasks that necessitate stretching the arms above the head—such as hanging clothes on a line, hanging pictures, and the like—stimulate the growth of the deltoid and cause a greater suppleness of the joint as well. Detrimental to the proper use of this part of the body are tight sleeves and narrow armholes in clothing. The kimono sleeve, so fashionable for a number of years, is admirable and would have been well calculated to give all the freedom necessary for arm and shoulder development had it not been decreed that the slouch or slump of the upper chest must go hand in hand with this style. Now that the after effect is so universally observed, and women have awakened to the danger to a healthy development of womanly beauty, tight waist and tight sleeves are à la mode! It is to be hoped that women will maintain a degree of independence in this respect, and, no matter what absurdities are proclaimed by



Shaking hands with oneself thus corrects many shoulder defects.

fashion, will assume the erect posture of graceful dignity, while giving the arms and shoulders freedom of action.

In a previous article, much stress was laid upon the value of swimming, not only as a general health giver, but as a means toward the development of the upper chest and bust. This sport brings into vital activity all the structures so needful to the growth and proper development of those features with which we are now concerned. Mention should be made, too, of the horizontal bar, as this is within the means of every one. A stout pole—not too heavy, but strong—can at small cost be fastened to a doorframe, and the practice of drawing the body up and down upon the bar be indulged in morning and night. Here the entire weight of the body is assumed by the shoulders, and the improvement quickly noted gives an added zest to one's effort at correction and development.

It seems needless to say that the

health-and-beauty-destroying effects of slouching are felt more particularly by the lungs than by any other structure; a cramped chest precludes all lung expansion, and normal breathing becomes impossible. With the assumption of an erect carriage, the chest is thrown out and the lungs begin gratefully to unfold, but—they have almost lost the function of breathing. Perhaps they really never were used to breathing fully, deeply, to taking in long drafts of delicious oxygen, freighting each little red blood corpuscle with its atom of oxygen, and speeding it on its rosy, merry errand to the remotest parts of the body, there to awaken the tissues to the delights of living. Ah, yes, there is much in knowing how to breathe and—in exercising that knowledge!

First, one should form the habit of breathing deeply always, but especially when out of doors; and it is an excellent practice with which to start the day. At an open window and in loose clothing, inhale long, deep, and full drafts of fresh morning air. By giving the lungs this morning bath the day is well started. Then, too, deep, full breathing swells out the chest and the hollow depressions at the base of the neck and around the arms that so seriously mar the beauty of these parts. A deep-breathing practice strongly commended by authorities on the subject consists simply in taking a regular exercise—at an open window or out of doors—morning and night, of ten or more deep inhalations through the nose, holding the breath for a count of five or ten, then slowly exhaling *through the mouth*, throwing the weight of the breath forcibly against the sides of the throat. The mouth should be opened only wide enough to permit the expulsion of the forced air with a hiss. This exercise will develop the contour of the throat and chest amazingly.

We breathe unconsciously, and as a rule very superficially; it would be well,

then, to practice deep, forceful breathing until it becomes a habit. Our lungs then would become air hungry if we attempted to cramp them, and we would find the indolent sag of the upper chest quite impossible.

Enough has been said to show that a healthy, well-developed bust is dependent to a great extent upon the foundations of the chest. Aside from the beautiful line running from the shoulder to the breast, it would be interesting to hear what constitutes an attractive bust. So many women do not exercise any judgment in this respect; they see a beautiful picture or a statue, and immediately long to be similarly developed.

The breast is differently placed in different women. A sculptor once remarked that "the breasts should always live at enmity with each other," meaning that they should turn outward instead of forward. The latter is usually the case with matured breasts, whereas in immature girls or women they point outward. Then, too, they may be set high or low upon the chest. The classic figures represent them high, and it is reasonable to suppose that the women of that period were so developed. A lower attachment begins with the decline of Italian art; and there can be no doubt that the form of the women of this period had undergone some modifications. Michael Angelo's figure of "Night," also his "Dawn" and his "Leda," fall far from the classic ideals, but they are superb; the breasts in all these magnificent figures being those of matured women and placed low upon the chest. The fact that they are not the high-set, conical, idealistic breasts of ancient Greek statuary does not detract from their beauty value; on the contrary—and *this is the point to be remembered*—they possess a beauty value of their own.

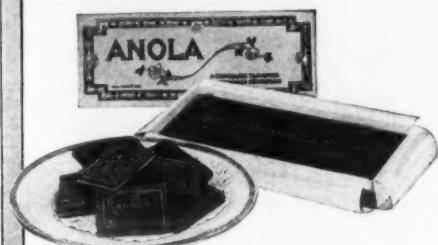
The truth of the matter is this: Every woman must study her bust in relation

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CORRECTING DEFECTS OF SHOULDERS AND BUST

to her own type, the desirability of a low or high setting depending on the bony framework. Also, mature breasts possess a beauty of their own, though they would be entirely out of place on small, childlike women. The shape of the breast and its consistency are also matters to be taken into account. A conically formed breast, set high upon the chest, is usually extremely firm in texture; whereas, when the bust is attached low, it is softer. This does not mean that it is pendulous; it merely means that it moves with the different positions assumed by the body. Many women consider this undesirable and seek to correct it with tonics and the like. If the breast has never been solidly attached to the chest after maturity has been reached, it never will be, because the texture of the tissues, and, in fact, the entire architecture of the body, is not calculated to promote it. Many artists do not admire a rigid bust, the consensus of art and beauty lovers being in favor of moderately low, fairly firm breasts.

Reference was made earlier in this article to the broken-down bosoms of many young girls of to-day. In former years the high corset and waist were a support, and prevented that sagging of the muscles which is so common among women who give themselves little care. In classic times women wore the mamillare—a bust supporter. French women evolved the Empire modes, the brassières, and various devices by means of which the bust is protected against the possibility of sagging, a defect that forever ruins its contour. The corsets of to-day are in every respect more hygienic than any previously used, but they do not consider the breasts, hence the present great vogue of the brassière. And this is of such grave importance because most women are ut-

terly lacking in the muscular development of the chest without which no bust can have a firm and lasting attachment; to hold it up and keep it in position, the continual wearing of a brassière is absolutely imperative. Careful women wear this little garment at night, too.

Poorly developed breasts are usually lacking in glandular growth, and can be stimulated in various ways, mainly through the blood, of course. There is no food that has a direct action upon them. Vaucaire Tonic, because of the galega it contains, is said to have a direct effect upon the bust. Some women are benefited by its use, as it is a general flesh builder, but it is entirely worthless without genuine galega, and that is not grown in this country. At any rate, Vaucaire Tonic is of doubtful value; it is the exceptional case that it benefits. Latterly physicians here have been giving to expectant and to nursing mothers a preparation that so stimulates the glands that a fine supply of milk is assured. It has also been used with marked success by those who desire a healthier development, as it is a powerful tonic. Further details concerning this preparation will be furnished those interested.

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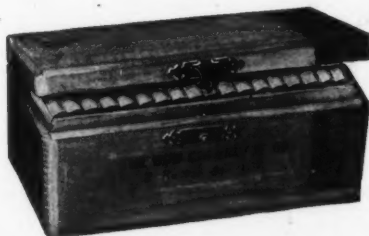
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